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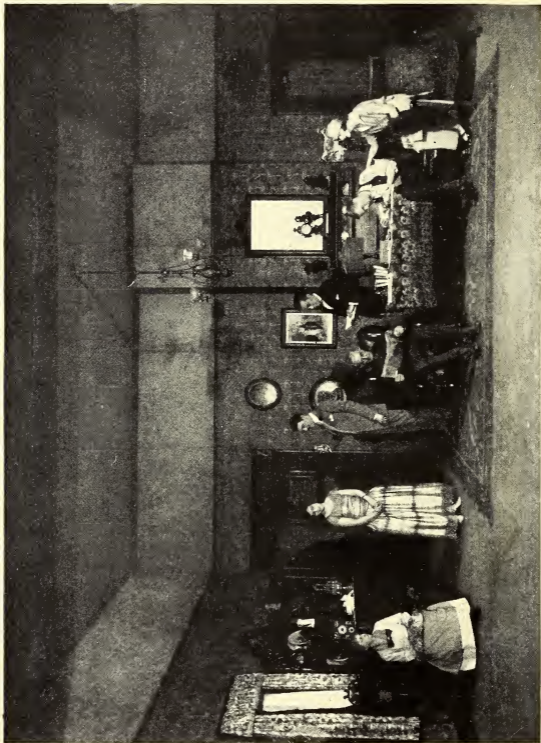
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THE SHOW-OFF







Stage scene of "The Show-Off"

THE SHOW-OFF

A TRANSCRIPT OF LIFE IN THREE ACTS

BY
GEORGE KELLY

PREFACE BY HEYWOOD BROWN

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TO BERT



CAST OF CHARACTERS

OF

“THE SHOW-OFF”

*As first produced at the Playhouse Theatre, New York,
on February 4th, 1924.*

CLARA	<i>Juliette Crosby</i>
MRS. FISHER	<i>Helen Lowell</i>
AMY	<i>Regina Wallace</i>
FRANK HYLAND	<i>Guy D'Ennery</i>
MR. FISHER	<i>C. W. Goodrich</i>
JOE	<i>Lee Tracy</i>
AUBREY PIPER	<i>Louis John Bartels</i>
MR. GILL	<i>Francis Pierlot</i>
MR. ROGERS	<i>Joseph Clayton</i>

“There’s nothing can be done by *anything*, Clara,—
when once the *main* thing is done. And that’s the
marriage. That’s where all the trouble starts—gettin’
married.”

MRS. FISHER.

PREFACE

I MIGHT as well begin boldly and say that "The Show-Off" is the best comedy which has yet been written by an American. To be sure, it departs quite radically in many respects from the form which has been associated traditionally with comedy. Critics who hold by old standards may point out that it is less lavish with incident than many another native play in the same mood, but they can hardly argue that human personality has ever been made more vivid, more truthful and more complete in the American theatre.

No one can question the authenticity of Aubrey Piper. He moves under his own steam from the moment the curtain rises. At no time does one feel that the hand of the playwright is still on the wheel directing the character to move in this direction or that in order to suit the exigencies of the story. And it seems to me that there is soundness in the scheme whereby the author makes some one character a concern above that of the tale itself. I am no longer drawn to the play "with a big idea" or the comedy constructed for the sake of a single telling scene. When an author works from such a blueprint he must almost inevitably find it necessary to scrunch and whittle his characters now and then to make them fit into his plot scheme. He must bulldoze a little. He must regiment his folk and Prussianize them.

No such interference is visited upon Aubrey Piper of "The Show-Off." He sets the pace and the story follows. This man is no creature born within the wings of the theatre. We have sat desk to desk with him in offices. He has bumped against us in the subway and as like as not he lives in the flat just across the hall. He has been wrenched out of life.

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But there is one more test which must be met by a play if it is to live among drama of the first order. The playwright has done a great deal if he has been able to create a living, breathing, individual human being. He must do more. At some point in the story this fictional man or woman must stand as a symbol of all mankind. There should be in him some recognizable common factor of humanity. And Aubrey meets the test. He brings to us the realization of the toughness of human fibre. In him there glints the glorious truth that personality endures against the blows of circumstance.

When I was in college much was said to us about the playwright's obligation to show the development of character. I hold that this obligation is imaginary and should be generally discarded for the sake of truth. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that human beings are moulded early and that their later history is largely an account of the manner in which fate breaks its fingernails in vain efforts to claw them into new habits of thought. The Aubrey Piper whom we see at the close of "The Show-Off" is precisely the same person who stalked into the first act. He has not changed. We know him better and more intimately because we have seen his reaction to various emotional stimuli, but the development has been in the minds of the audience and not in the soul of Aubrey.

Personally I came to like Aubrey exceedingly before the evening was done. I think that George Kelly has succeeded magnificently in this respect. It is essential that the audience should come in time to have a friendliness for the central figure of the comedy. But this is no easy task. Special pleading will not avail and Kelly does not employ it. An author, like a judge or a baseball umpire, is under obligation to preserve at least the appearance of neutrality. He may not lean down from Olympus too palpably to pat some favorite character on the head. Tenderness he may have—indeed we think it becomes the dramatist

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—but it must be shown subtly. The sleight-of-hand ought to be fast and skilful enough to deceive the human eye.

And so we have it here. George Kelly builds up the case for Aubrey Piper by countless small strokes. By degrees he opens up the heart of the man. There he stands—liar, braggart, egotist, but the very consistency of his faults colors them with magnificence. From Prometheus down, mankind has chosen for its heroes men who stood pat. “Be yourself, Mother Fisher,” cries Aubrey to his mother-in-law in times of stress, and it is a slogan which he has taken to heart. There is no need for anyone to say “Be yourself, Aubrey.” He never is tempted for a moment to be anything else.

Of course, it may truthfully be said that Aubrey lives in a fantastic dream world of his own creation, but once he has built his world he stands by it. God himself has done no more.

HEYWOOD BROWN.

FIRST ACT

THE SHOW-OFF

THE SHOW-OFF

THE FIRST ACT

After a slight pause a door out at the left is heard to close, and then CLARA comes in carrying a fancy box of candy. She glances about the room and crosses to the kitchen-door at the right.

CLARA. Anybody out there? [*She crosses back again towards the left, laying the box of candy on the center-table as she passes. Upon reaching the parlor-doors, at the left, she opens them and calls into the parlor.*] You in there, Mom? [*MRS. FISHER can be heard coming down the stairs. CLARA turns, with a glance toward the hall-door, and moves over to the mirror above the mantel-piece. MRS. FISHER appears in the hall-door and glances in at CLARA.*]

MRS. FISHER. Oh, it's *you*, Clara. [*She peers out into the hall.*]

CLARA. Where is everybody?

MRS. FISHER. I thought I heard that front-door open.

CLARA. Where are they all?

MRS. FISHER [*Moving towards the parlor-door*]. Your Pop's gone over to Gillespie's for some tobacco: I don't know where Joe is. [*She glances into the parlor, then turns and kisses CLARA. CLARA moves down to the chair at the left of the center-table and MRS. FISHER moves over to the kitchen-door at the right.*] I don't know how you can stand that fur on you, Clara, a night like this.

CLARA. It's rather cool out.

MRS. FISHER [*Calling out through the kitchen-door*]. You out there, Joe?

CLARA [*Sitting down*]. He isn't out there.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning around to the cellar-door at her left*]. He must be around here somewhere; he was here not two minutes ago, when I went upstairs. [*Opening the cellar-door and calling down.*] You down there, Joey?

JOE [*From the cellar*]. Yes.

MRS. FISHER. All right. [*Closes the cellar-door.*]

JOE. What do you want?

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to the cellar-door again*]. What?

JOE and CLARA, *speaking together.*

JOE. What do you want?

CLARA. He sez, "What do you want?"

MRS. FISHER [*Opening the cellar-door again*]. I don't want anything; I was just wonderin' where you were. [*She closes the cellar-door and comes a step or two forward, fastening an old-fashioned brooch that she wears on the front of her dress.*] He spends half his time down in that cellar foolin' with that old radio thing. He sez he can make one himself, but I sez, "I'll believe it when I see it."

CLARA. There's some of that candy you like.

MRS. FISHER [*Crossing to the center-table*]. Oh, did you bring me some more of that nice candy? [*Beginning to untie the ribbon around the candy.*] I never got a taste of that last you brought.

CLARA. Why not?

MRS. FISHER. Why,—Lady Jane took it away with her down to the office, and never brought it back. She sez the girls down there et it. I sez, "I guess you're the girl that et it." She sez she didn't, but I know she did.

CLARA. Well, I hope you'll keep that out of sight, and don't let her take that too.

MRS. FISHER [*Opening the candy*]. Oh, she won't get her hands on this, I can promise you that. Let her buy her own candy if she's so fond of it.

CLARA [*Opening the "Delineator"*]. She won't buy much of anything, if she can get hold of it any other way.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, isn't that lovely! Look Clara—[*Tilting the box of candy towards CLARA.*] Don't that look nice?

CLARA. Yes, they do their candy up nice.

MRS. FISHER [*Gingerly picking up the cover of lace paper*]. That looks just like Irish point lace, don't it? [CLARA *nods yes.*] I think I'll put that away somewhere,—in a book or something. My, look at all the colors—look Clara—did you ever see so many colors?

CLARA. It's pretty, isn't it?

MRS. FISHER. It's beautiful—seems a pity to spoil it. Do you want a bit of it, Clara?

CLARA. Not now, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. I think I'll take this pink one here. I like the pink ones. [*She picks up the box and the lid and moves around to the chair at the right of the table.*] Mind how they all have this little fancy paper around them. You'd wonder they'd bother, wouldn't you?—just for a bit of candy. [*She tastes the candy and chews, critically.*] That's nice candy, isn't it?

CLARA. Yes, I like bonbons.

MRS. FISHER [*Sitting down*]. I do too—I think I like them better than most anything. [*Putting the box of candy down on the table.*] I'm sorry these are not all bonbons.

CLARA [*Looking up from the "Delineator"*]. They are all bonbons—[*Her Mother looks at her.*] There's nothing else in there.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, are they!—I thought only the pink ones were the bonbons.

CLARA. No, they're all bonbons.

MRS. FISHER. Well, that's lovely. I can eat any one of them

I like, then, can't I? [*She sits back in her chair and rocks and chews.*] How is it you're not home to-night, Clara?

CLARA. Frank had to go to a dinner of some kind at the Glenwood Club; so I thought I'd stay in town and get something. He said he might call for me here around eight o'clock. I was in anyway about my lamp.

MRS. FISHER [*Rocking*]. Men are always going to dinners somewhere. Seems to me they can't talk about anything unless they've got a dinner in front of them. It's no wonder so many of them are fat.

CLARA [*Turning a page of the "Delineator"*]. Where's Amy,—upstairs?

MRS. FISHER. Yes, she's gettin' dressed. I was just hookin' her when you came in.

CLARA. Is she going out?

MRS. FISHER. I don't know whether she is or not,—I didn't hear her say. [*Leaning a bit towards CLARA, and lowering her voice.*] But it's Wednesday night, you know.

CLARA. Is that fellow still coming here?

MRS. FISHER. Oh, right on the dot—such as he is. Sunday nights too now, as well as Wednesdays. It looks like a steady thing. And you never in your life heard anybody talk so much, Clara—I don't know how she stands him. Your Pop can hardly stay in the room where he is. I believe in my heart that's the reason he went over to Gillespie's to-night—so he wouldn't be listenin' to him.

CLARA. Doesn't she take him into the parlor?

MRS. FISHER. She does, yes; but she might just as well leave him out here; for he's not in there five minutes till he's out here again—talkin' about Socialism. That's all you hear,—Socialism—and capital and labor. You'd think he knew somethin' about it. And the Pennsylvania Railroad. He's always talkin' about that, too. That's where he works, you know. I don't know what

he does down there. He sez himself he's head of the freight department; but as I sez to our Joe, I sez, "I don't know how *he* can be head of *anything*, from the talk of him. Joe sez he thinks he's a nut. And your Pop told him right to his face here last Sunday night—that he didn't know the meanin' of the word Socialism. [*She checks herself and gets up.*] I'd better not be talkin' so loud,—he's apt to walk in on us. [*She moves up towards the hall-door and glances out.*] He's a great joker, you know—That's what he did last Sunday night. [*Coming forward again to a point above the center-table.*] I never got such a fright in my life. Your Pop and me was sittin' here talkin', just the way we are now, when, all of a sudden, I glanced up, and there he was,—standin' in the doorway there, doin' this [*She points her forefinger and thumb at CLARA and wiggles her thumb. CLARA laughs faintly*—as though he was a bandit, you know. Well,—I thought the breath'd leave my body. Then he sez, "Haha!—that's the time I fooled you!" I don't know how long he'd been standin' there. But, as luck'd have it, we wasn't talkin' about him at the time: altho we *had* been talkin' about him not five minutes before. I don't know whether he heard us or not, for I don't know how long he'd been standin' there. I hope he did: it'd just be the price of him, for bein' so smart. [*With a glance toward the hall-door, and speaking very confidentially.*] But, you know, what'd kill you, Clara, you can't say a *word* about him in front of her. [*CLARA moves.*] Oh, not a word. No matter what he sez, she thinks it's lovely. When Joe told her here the other night he thought he was a nut, she just laughed, and said that Joe was jealous of him—because *he* could express himself and *he* couldn't. [*CLARA smiles.*] You never *heard* such talk. And, you know, Clara, I think he wears a wig. [*CLARA laughs.*] I do, honestly. And our Joe sez he thinks he does too. But when I asked *her* about it here one mornin', I thought she'd take the head right off me. You never

seen anybody get themselves into such a temper. She sez, "It's a lie," she sez, "he *don't* wear a wig." She sez, "People always say somethin' like that about a fellow that makes a good appearance." But, *I* think he does, just the same; and the first chance I get I'm goin' to take a good look. [*She moves around to her chair again, at the right of the table.*] He often sits right here, you know, under this light, while he's talkin'; [*Selecting another piece of candy*] and I'm goin' to look close the very first chance I get. [*She sits down.*] *I* can tell a wig as good as anybody. [*She rocks and looks straight out, chewing.*] She won't make a liar out of me.

AMY [*From the head of the stairs*]. Mom, did you see anythink of that blue bar-pin of mine?

MRS. FISHER [*Calling back to her*]. Which blue bar-pin?

AMY. Well now, how many blue bar-pins have I got?

MRS. FISHER. I don't know how many you've got, and I don't care! [*Turning back again and speaking rather to herself.*] So don't be botherin' me about it. [*Calling up to AMY again.*] If you can't find it, go look for it. [*She resumes her rocking and her chewing.*] She thinks all she's got to do is come to the head of them stairs and holler and everybody'll jump.—But she'll get sadly left.—I've got somethin' else to do besides waitin' on her. [*She takes another bite of candy, and turns casually to CLARA.*] Did you get your lamp yet?

CLARA. No, that's what I was in town to-day about. The girl sez they haven't been able to match the silk till yesterday.

MRS. FISHER. I wish I could get somethin' done to that one of mine there in the parlor; the wire's right out through the silk in two places.

CLARA. Why doesn't Amy take it in some day [*MRS. FISHER makes a sound of amusement*].—when she's going to work?

MRS. FISHER. Why don't she! It's all Amy can do to take *herself* into work these days. I've almost got to *push* her out the door every morning.

CLARA. Couldn't she take it over at lunch-time?

MRS. FISHER. She sez she hasn't time at lunch-time.

CLARA. Oh, she has so time.

MRS. FISHER. Of course she has.

CLARA. It's only at Ninth and Chestnut, and she's at Eighth.

MRS. FISHER. That's what I told her. I sez, "I bet if it was somethin' for yourself you'd have plenty of time." [*Leaning towards CLARA.*] But, you know,—what I think, Clara—I think she's meetin' this fellow at lunch-time. Because in the mornin's here she stands fixin' herself there in front of that glass till it's a wonder to me she don't drop on the floor. And whenever you see them gettin' very particular that way all of a sudden—there's somethin' in the wind. I sez to her the other mornin', when she was settlin' herself there till I got tired lookin' at her, I sez, "You must be goin' to see him to-day, ain't you?" And she sez, "He must be on your mind, isn't he?" "No," I sez, "but by the looks of things, I think he's on yours. And," I sez, "maybe after you get him you won't think he was worth all the bother you went to." Because, you know, Clara, she don't know a *thing* about him; except that he works in the Pennsylvania freight office—I believe he *did* tell her that much. But *she* don't know whether he works there or not. He could tell her anything; and she'd believe it [*Taking another bite of candy and settling herself in her chair*—before she'd believe me.

CLARA. That's where he works [*Her Mother looks at her sharply*—at the Pennsylvania freight office.

MRS. FISHER. How do you know?

CLARA. Frank knows him.

MRS. FISHER. Frank Hyland?

CLARA. Yes,—he sez he eats his lunch at the same place, there at Fifteenth and Arch.

MRS. FISHER. And, does he say he knows him?

CLARA. Yes. He sez he's seen him around there for a long

time. I've often heard him speak of him, but I didn't know it was the same fellow. Frank always called him Carnation Charlie. He sez he's always got a big carnation in his buttonhole.

MRS. FISHER [*Tapping the table conclusively*]. That's the one; he's always got it on when he comes here, too.

CLARA. Frank sez he's never seen him without it.

MRS. FISHER. I haven't either. And I believe in my heart, Clara, that's what's turned her head. [CLARA *smiles*.] You often see things like that, you know. The worst fool of a man can put a carnation in his coat or his hat over one eye, and half a dozen sensible women'll be dyin' about him.

CLARA. Well, Frank sez this fellow's absolutely *crazy*.

MRS. FISHER. That's what your Father sez.

CLARA. He sez they kid the life out of him down around the restaurant there.

MRS. FISHER. Well, he don't know who Frank Hyland *is*, does he?

CLARA. No, Frank didn't tell him. He sez he just happened to get talking to him the other day and he mentioned that he was calling on a girl up this way named Fisher. So then Frank found out what his right name was, and when he came home he asked me about him.

MRS. FISHER. Well, is he sure it's the same fellow?

CLARA. He told him his name was Piper.

MRS. FISHER [*With finality*]. That the name—Aubrey Piper. I don't know where he got the Aubrey from; *I* never heard of such a name before, did you?

CLARA. Yes, I've heard the name of Aubrey.

MRS. FISHER [*Rocking*]. Well, I never did. Sounds to me more like a place than a name. [AMY *can be heard coming down the stairs*.] Here she comes. [*She snatches up the box of candy and puts it under her apron*.]

CLARA. Don't say anything, now.

MRS. FISHER. It'd be no use. [*Trying to be casual.*] What color are you havin' your lamp-shade made, Clara?

AMY [*Hurrying in at the hall-door*]. Mom, you *must* have seen something of that bar-pin of mine; I can't find it anywhere. [*She tosses a beaded bag onto the center-table and turns to the mantelpiece and looks for the bar-pin.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Abstractedly*]. I saw a pin of yours in one of the drawers in the buffet there a few days ago, I don't know whether it's there yet or not.

AMY [*Hurrying across to the buffet at the right*]. How's it you're not home to-night, Clara? [*She starts to rummage in the buffet-drawers.*]

CLARA [*Casually*]. I had my dinner in town.

AMY. Is that parlor all right, Mom?

MRS. FISHER. Certainly it's all right.

AMY. Well, did you side it?

MRS. FISHER [*Sharply*]. Certainly I sided it.

AMY. All right, Mom, don't make a speech about it.

MRS. FISHER [*Considerably ruffled*]. No, but you'd think the way she sez it that I sat here all day with my two hands as long as eachother. [*AMY finds the pin and slams the drawer shut, leaving various ends of tape and pieces of lace hanging out. Then she starts back towards the mirror over the mantelpiece.*] Did you find it?

AMY [*Disrespectfully*]. Yes.

MRS. FISHER [*Rising, still holding the candy under her apron, and stepping over to the buffet*]. It's a wonder you wouldn't leave these drawers the way you found them. She does that every time she goes near this buffet. [*She puts the various odds and ends back into the drawers and closes them.*] She's in such a great rush lately.

AMY [*Settling herself at the mirror*]. Isn't that a new dress on you, Clara?

CLARA. Yes.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming back to her chair*]. I'd like to see the kind of house you'll keep.

AMY. Well, I hope it won't be anything like this one, I'll tell you that.

MRS. FISHER [*Stopping halfway to her chair*]. Oh, go easy, lady! You might be very glad to have half as good, if you live long enough. [*Continuing to her chair, and looking keenly at CLARA'S dress.*] I thought I hadn't seen that dress on you before. [*She sits down.*]

CLARA. No, I only got it last week.

MRS. FISHER. Stand up there till I see it. [*CLARA gets up and takes a couple of steps towards the left, pulling down her skirt, then turns around to her left and faces her Mother. AMY comes down to the center-table, looking sharply at CLARA'S dress.*]

CLARA. I got it at a sale in Strawbridge's. [*AMY opens her beaded purse on the table and looks at herself critically in the little inside mirror; then adds a touch of powder.*]

MRS. FISHER. It's a nice length.

CLARA. I didn't have to have a thing touched on it.

MRS. FISHER. That's what I was tellin' you about the other day, Amy.—Do you see the way that dress hangs?

AMY. Yeh.

MRS. FISHER [*Speaking directly to CLARA*]. There was a dress on Queen Mary in last Sunday's Ledger that I was sayin' to Amy I thought'd look good on me. And it had all buttons up and down the front, the way that has.

CLARA [*Coming back to her chair*]. A lot of the new dresses are made that way.

MRS. FISHER. How much was it?

CLARA [*Sitting down*]. Forty-two seventy-five. [*AMY starts to polish her nails.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Turning away, with a lift of her eyes to Heaven*]. You must have plenty of money.

AMY. Mom, where'd you put those roses I brought home?

MRS. FISHER. They're out there in the dining-room. [AMY starts towards the right.] I put them in some water. [AMY goes out; and MRS. FISHER rocks for a second or two; then she turns and calls after AMY.] I think it's time you lit the light in that parlor, Amy, if that fellow of yours is comin' here to-night. [She rocks a little bit more, then turns casually to CLARA.] What time is it by your watch there, Clara? [With a glance toward the mantelpiece at the back.] That old clock of ours is stopped again.

CLARA [Looking at her wrist-watch]. Quarter past eight.

MRS. FISHER [Getting up suddenly]. I must tell her. [The box of candy lands on the floor.] My God, there goes the candy! Pick that up, Clara, I can't stoop; and put it out of sight. [Going towards the door up at the right.] It's a wonder I didn't do that while she was in here. [Calling out after AMY.] Amy!

AMY. Yes?

MRS. FISHER. Clara sez it's a quarter past eight by her watch; —you'd better get some kind of a light in that parlor if that fellow's comin'. [She moves back towards her chair, then speaks in a very subdued tone to CLARA.] She brings flowers home with her from the city now, every night he's coming. She must have flowers for him in the parlor. [She sits down.] I told her, I sez, "I bet it'd be a long time before you'd bring any flowers home from the city to me."

CLARA. That's another new dress on her to-night, isn't it?

MRS. FISHER [Straightening the magazines on the table]. She's had it about a week.

CLARA. What's she getting so many new dresses for lately?

MRS. FISHER. Heaven knows, I don't.

CLARA. That's the fourth I've seen on her since Easter.

MRS. FISHER. Tryin' to make him think she's rich, I guess. I told her the other night she might not get so many after she gets him.

AMY [*Entering from the right, carrying a vase of roses, and crossing directly to the parlor-doors at the left*]. You need another box of matches out there, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. Is that box of matches gone already?

AMY. Pretty near. [*She goes into the parlor.*]

MRS. FISHER. I swear I don't know where all the matches go to;—seems to me all I do is buy matches. [*AMY strikes a match in the parlor.*] Be careful of them lace curtains there, now, Amy, if you're goin' to light that lamp. [*The lamp is lit in the parlor; and AMY closes the parlor-doors.*]

CLARA [*Rising and handing her Mother the box of candy, which she has been holding since she picked it up from the floor.*] I think I'll go, before he comes.

MRS. FISHER [*Rising*]. You'd better, unless you want to be here all night. [*CLARA moves up to the looking-glass over the mantelpiece, and MRS. FISHER crosses to the buffet with the candy.*] For if he ever starts talkin', you'll never get out. [*She puts the candy into one of the drawers, then starts across towards the hall-door, up at the left.*] You wouldn't mind, you know, if he'd stay in there in the parlor;—but the minute ever he hears a voice out here, he's out like a jumpin'-jack. [*AMY can be heard coughing out in the hallway, and, as MRS. FISHER passes back of CLARA, CLARA half turns and suggests with a movement of her hand that AMY might overhear her.*] Oh, he's not here yet; you'd know it if he was. [*She peers keenly out into the hallway, then turns and tiptoes back to CLARA, and speaks in a very low tone.*] She stands out there in the vestibule until she sees him get off the trolley, then she comes in and lets him ring, so he won't think she's been waitin' for him. [*She tiptoes back and peers out into the hallway again, and CLARA moves over to the right, adjusting her neck-piece. MRS. FISHER comes back to the center-table.*] You never seen anybody so crazy about a fellow.

CLARA. Well, I think somebody ought to tell her about him, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*Folding the ribbon and the paper from the candy-box*]. What's the good of tellin' her;—she'd only give you a look if you said anything about him.

CLARA. Well, I'd say it anyway, whether she gave me a look or not; for, remember what I'm telling you, Mom, it's *you* that'll have them on your hands if she takes him. [*Her Mother looks at her sharply.*]

MRS. FISHER. *I'll* have them on my hands?

CLARA [*Turning to her Mother*]. Well now, who else *will*, Mom? You couldn't leave her out on the street; and that's exactly where she'll land if she takes *him*; for you know how long Amy could get along on a hundred and fifty dollars a month.

MRS. FISHER. Takes more than that to keep herself, never name a house and a husband.

CLARA. Well, that's exactly what he gets, for he's only a clerk down there.

MRS. FISHER. He told her he was the head of the department.

CLARA. He's a clerk, Mom,—like a hundred others down there: Frank knows what he does.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving a step or two nearer to CLARA*]. Well, why don't *you* say something to her, Clara?

CLARA. Now, you know how much attention she'd pay to anything I'd say.

MRS. FISHER [*With measured definiteness*]. She won't pay any attention to what anybody sez.

CLARA. Especially if she knew it was Frank Hyland that said it.

MRS. FISHER. She thinks everybody's jealous of him; and jealous of *her* because she's gettin' him. So let her get him. If she makes her bed, let her lie in it.

CLARA [*Looking straight out*]. Well, that's the trouble, Mom; it isn't always the person that makes the bed that lies *in* it.—Very often somebody else has to lie in it.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning back to the table*]. Well, it'll be nobody around here, I can promise you that.

CLARA [*Turning to the buffet-mirror*]. Maybe not.

MRS. FISHER. No maybe about it.

CLARA. But you know what *you* are, Mom, where Amy's concerned.

MRS. FISHER [*Taking a step towards CLARA*]. Why, don't be silly, Clara. Do you think your Father'd be listenin' to that rattle-brain here every night?

CLARA [*Turning and speaking directly to her Mother*]. He has to listen to him now, doesn't he—or go out, as he did to-night. [*The front-door closes. They both turn and glance in the direction of the hallway.*] Maybe this is Frank now. [*There is a slight pause, then FRANK HYLAND comes in, and comes forward to the center-table.*]

MRS. FISHER. Hello, Frank.

HYLAND. Hello, Mother. Hello, Clara. [*He puts his hat down on the table.*]

CLARA. I was just going; I thought maybe you weren't coming.

HYLAND [*Looking at his watch*]. I couldn't get away from there until nearly eight o'clock.

MRS. FISHER. Frank,—Clara sez you know this fellow that's comin' to see our Amy.

HYLAND. Who, Piper?

MRS. FISHER. Yes—the one that does so much talkin'.

HYLAND. Yes, I know him. [*He moves to the left and sits down on the arm of the Morris-chair.*]

MRS. FISHER. I think he's crazy, Frank; [*HYLAND makes a sound of amusement*] I do, honestly; and Pop and Joe sez they think he is, too.

CLARA. Mom sez he told Amy he was head of the freight department, Frank.

MRS. FISHER. He did, honestly, Frank; and she believes him. But Clara sez *you* say he's only a clerk down there.

CLARA. That's all he is, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. He isn't head of the freight department, is he, Frank? [FRANK *sits looking away off, dreamily.*]

CLARA. Frank—

HYLAND [*Turning*]. I beg your pardon, what did you say, dear?

MRS. FISHER. He isn't head of the freight department down there, is he?

HYLAND. No, he's just one of the clerks.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to CLARA*]. Now, you see that—and she'd only laugh at you if you told *her* that. [*Turning back to HYLAND.*] How much do them freight-clerks get a month, Frank? [HYLAND *is gazing out of the window at the left.*]

CLARA. Frank, Mom is talking to you.

HYLAND [*Turning*]. Oh, I beg your pardon, what did you say, Mother?

MRS. FISHER. I say, how much do them freight-clerks get a month?

HYLAND. Why,—about a hundred and forty or fifty dollars,—I don't know exactly; but not any more than that. [*His eyes wander to the window again.*]

MRS. FISHER. What are we goin' to do about it, Frank?—It looks like a steady thing. He comes Wednesday and Sunday nights now—and if she ever takes him, she'll be the poorest woman in this city. You know how our Amy spends money. [*Turning to CLARA.*] She's got seven pairs of shoes up in that hall-closet.

HYLAND [*Abstractedly*]. Amy certainly does let her money fly. [MRS. FISHER *gives him a stoney look.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, if she does she earns it. She might as well have a good time now while she's young;—God knows what's ahead of her. [*The front door-bell rings,—a series of funny little taps.*] Here he is now, I know his ring. [*She steps up to the mantelpiece and glances out into the hallway.*]

CLARA [*Turning towards the kitchen-door*]. We'll go out the side-door. Come on, Frank. [*HYLAND rises and picks up his hat from the table, as he crosses below it.*]

HYLAND. Good-night, Mother. [*MRS. FISHER is too occupied with her interests out in the hallway.*] Do you want to go to a picture, Clara?

CLARA [*Going out at the right*]. I don't care.

HYLAND [*Following her*]. It's only about twenty after eight. [*He glances at his watch.*]

CLARA. We can get the second show at Broad and Columbia Avenue.

MRS. FISHER [*Following them out*]. Frank, I wish you'd talk to Amy some time, and tell her what you told me; she won't believe *me*.

HYLAND. I don't suppose she'd believe me, either, Mother.

AUBREY [*Out at the front-door*]. Right on the job!

AMY. Hello!

AUBREY. The pride of old West Philly! [*He laughs a bit, boisterously.*]

AMY. I'll take your hat, Aubrey.

AUBREY. Anything to please the ladies. [*The front-door closes.*] The boy rode off with many thanks, and many a backward bow. [*He laughs again, rather wildly.* MRS. FISHER *tip-toes into the room from the right and stands listening, keenly.*] Do you know, I think I'll have to get hold of an airship somewhere, Amy, to come out here to see you.

AMY. It is quite a trip for you, isn't it?

AUBREY. Just one shining hour and a half, if you say it

quick; by the little old Brill special. And how is the Mother? [MRS. FISHER'S face hardens, and a door closes. Then she tiptoes over to the double-doors at the left and listens. AUBREY'S voice can be heard fairly distinctly from beyond the doors.] Say, Amy—wasn't that hold-up in last night's paper somewhere out this way?

AMY. Yes, it was right over here on Erie Avenue. [MR. FISHER appears in the hall-door and stands, looking with amusement at his wife. He takes an old pipe and tobacco-pouch from the pocket of his knit-jacket and starts to fill the pipe.]

AUBREY. A doctor's house, wasn't it?

AMY. Yes, Doctor Donnelly's. They got nearly two thousand dollars.

AUBREY. I don't believe that, Amy.

AMY. Why not?

AUBREY. I don't believe there's that much money in North Philadelphia. [He roars with laughter. MR. FISHER gives his wife a little dig in the ribs and makes a sound like a startled cat. She starts violently, smothering a little shriek.]

MRS. FISHER. Oh, you frightened me! [MR. FISHER continues to the center-table and sets his newspaper down.]

MR. FISHER. You ought to be pretty nearly frightened to death by this time, oughtn't you? [He replaces the tobacco-pouch in his pocket.]

MRS. FISHER. Well, it's no wonder I'd be.

MR. FISHER. You've been jumpin' that way ever since I knew you.

MRS. FISHER. Well, what do you come pussy-footin' in that way for, when you know how nervous I am?

MR. FISHER. I didn't come pussy-footin' in at all.

MRS. FISHER. You did so, or I'd have heard you.

MR. FISHER. You *would* have heard me, if you weren't so busy listenin' to somethin' that's none of your business.

MRS. FISHER. Well, it'll be somethin' of my business if you go spillin' any of that dirty old tobacco on my nice new table-cloth, I tell you that. [*She resumes her listening at the door, and MR. FISHER brushes the tobacco from the table-cloth.*]

MR. FISHER. I'm not spillin' any of it. [*There's a burst of laughter from AUBREY in the parlor, and MR. FISHER looks toward the parlor-door.*] Who's in there—Windy? [*MRS. FISHER nods, yes, and the old man moves down at the right of the center-table, picking up the newspaper and reaching into his vest-pocket for his spectacles.*] What's he doin', laughin' at some more of them West Philadelphia jokes of his? [*He sits down to read, in the chair at the right of the table, and MRS. FISHER comes tiptoeing towards the chair at the left of the table.*]

MRS. FISHER [*In a lowered tone*]. He was astin' Amy about that robbery over at Doctor Donnelly's yesterday mornin'; and when she told him the bandits got away with nearly two thousand dollars, he said it couldn't be true, because there wasn't that much money in North Philadelphia.

MR. FISHER [*With mock laughter*]. Ha! Ha! Ha!

MRS. FISHER [*Returning to the parlor-doors to listen*]. Shush! [*There's a Ha! Ha! Ha! from the parlor from AUBREY, and the old man looks quickly and distrustfully in that direction. AUBREY continues to laugh.*]

MR. FISHER [*Settling himself to read*]. I'll bet there wouldn't have to be much money up this way to be more than he's got. [*There's a sound of hammering in the cellar. MRS. FISHER hurries across to the cellar-door.*]

AUBREY [*In the parlor*]. You know, I discovered tonight, Amy, that I can save a full fifteen minutes on this trip over here, by transferring up Twenty-ninth to the Lehigh Avenue car, instead of going on in and up Nineteenth.

MRS. FISHER [*Opening the cellar-door and calling down, in a subdued voice*]. Joe! Stop that hammering down there, we

can't hear our ears up here. [*The old man gives a hard chuckle.* MRS. FISHER *tip-toes back towards the parlor-doors, looking at her husband stonily.*] What ails you?

AMY [*In the parlor*]. It is hard to get out here, unless you use the Park trolley. I hear some people say that's a great deal quicker. [MRS. FISHER *listens keenly again with her ear against the parlor-door.*]

AUBREY. I don't know how they ever found this place.

AMY. I don't know how *you* ever found West Philadelphia.

AUBREY. Lot of people think they haven't found it *yet*. [*He burst into violent laughter.*] Lost somewhere between the Schuylkill River and Darby. [*He laughs some more. The old man looks piercingly over his spectacles at his wife.*]

MR. FISHER [*Almost shouting*]. Come away from there, Josie! [MRS. FISHER *is startled almost to death. She places her hand on her bosom and moves away from the door towards the center of the room.*] Don't be listenin' to that damned blather-skite.

MRS. FISHER [*Trying to be casual*]. I wasn't listenin' to him;—I was just seein' what he was sayin'. [*She moves up to the little stand between the hall-door and the mantelpiece and picks up her knitting-bag. AMY is very much amused at something AUBREY has just said in the parlor. MRS. FISHER glances toward the parlor-doors, then comes down to her husband's right, and, with another glance toward the door, speaks very confidentially.*] He was astin' Amy how she ever found this part of town to live in; and she was astin' him how *he* ever found West Philadelphia. He sez West Philadelphia ain't *been* found yet,—that it's lost somewhere between the Schuylkill River and Darby. [*She moves over to the arm-chair at the right, in front of the window, and sits down.*]

MR. FISHER. I wish to God *he'd* get lost some night, somewhere between here and the Schuylkill River.

MRS. FISHER [*Taking the needles and the pink wool out of the knitting-bag.*] What'd kill you, too, you know, he always dies laughin' whenever he gets off one of them bum jokes.

MR. FISHER. Somebody's got to laugh.

AUBREY [*From the parlor*]. Ha! Ha! That's the time I fooled you, Amy! Leave it to me to put it right over the plate. [*AMY has quite a laughing fit in the parlor. Her Mother looks narrowly toward the parlor-doors until AMY has finished laughing.*]

MRS. FISHER. He's got Amy laughin' now, too. [*She commences to knit; and there is a slight pause. Then she glances at the clock on the mantelpiece.*] That old clock has stopped again, Neil.

MR. FISHER [*Without moving*]. Needs fixin'.

MRS. FISHER. It's *been* fixed twice,—don't do no good. [*There is a pause, and MRS. FISHER sighs.*] I think it's terrible lonesome not to hear the clock—it's too still in a room.—It always sounds to me like soap-bubbles meltin'.

MR. FISHER. H'm—here's a fellow here's been left a quarter of a million dollars, and he won't take it.

MRS. FISHER [*Sharply*]. What's the matter with him?

MR. FISHER. Nothin' at all's the matter with him—he just won't take it.

MRS. FISHER [*Resuming her knitting*]. He mustn't be in his right mind, poor boy. I wisht somebody'd leave *me* a quarter of a million dollars.

MR. FISHER. You wouldn't know what to do with it if they did.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I know *one* thing I'd do with it; and that'd be to have somethin' done to that old heater of ours downstairs, and not be freezin' to death all *next* winter, the way I was last. [*AUBREY laughs in the parlor. MRS. FISHER glances toward the parlor-doors; then shifts her knitting.*] Every sweater I start I swear it'll be the last—and then I start right in on

another. [*She gives a faint little laugh and looks at her husband; but he's reading; so she subsides and continues to knit. Suddenly she stops and rests her knitting in her lap, and thinks; then turns to MR. FISHER.*] Well now, what becomes of money like that, Neil, that people won't take?

MR. FISHER [*Squinting at her over his glasses*]. What'd you say?

MRS. FISHER. I say, what becomes of money that people won't take that way?

MR. FISHER [*Resuming his paper*]. Why, nothing at all becomes of it;—they just come and get it. [*She looks at him steadily.*]

MRS. FISHER. Who does?

MR. FISHER. The people that won't take it. [*MRS. FISHER is puzzled for a second.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Resuming her knitting*]. Well, I'll bet if they left it to *me* they wouldn't have to come and take it.

MR. FISHER [*Looking at her again with a shade of irritation*]. Who wouldn't have to come and take it?

MRS. FISHER [*Losing her temper*]. Why, the people that won't take it!

MR. FISHER. What are you talkin' about, Josie, do you know?

MRS. FISHER. Yes, I do know very well what I'm talkin' about!—but I don't think *you* do.

MR. FISHER. Let me read this paper, will you?

MRS. FISHER [*Knitting rapidly*]. Go ahead and read it!—I'm sure I don't want to talk to you. It was you that started talkin' to me—readin' about that young man that took the money. [*JOE comes up from the cellar, carrying some kind of a radio-arrangement on a flat base-board and a screw-driver.*] Joe, I'm goin' to have that light took out of that cellar, if you don't stop spendin' all your time down there.

JOE [*Holding his work under the table-lamp to look at it closely*]. You don't want me hammerin' up here, do you?

MRS. FISHER. I don't want you hammerin' anywhere. I want you to go out at night and get some air, and not be cooped up in that dusty old cellar. [*There's a violent burst of laughter from AUBREY in the parlor. JOE glances toward the parlor-doors, then turns, with something of distress in his expression, to his Mother.*]

JOE. Who's in there—the Pennsylvania Railroad?

MRS. FISHER. Yes, and he's got about as much sense as yourself.

JOE [*Moving around to the chair at the left of the center-table and sitting down*]. You won't say that when you're sittin' here listenin' to the Grand Opera. [*He starts to tighten the small screws in the base-board.*]

MRS. FISHER. I won't be listenin' to it, don't fret—I got somethin' else to do besides listenin' to a lot of dagoes singin'.

MR. FISHER [*Looking over at JOE's radio-arrangement*]. What is it?

MRS. FISHER. He sez when he gets that radio-thing finished, I can sit here and listen to the Grand Opera.

MR. FISHER [*Resuming his paper*]. What's that, them singin' people?

MRS. FISHER. Yes—them that goes away up high, you know—that Clara has on her victrola. [*The parlor-door opens, and AMY comes out, walking on air.*]

AMY. Oh, it's all right if you let it run for a minute. [*She crosses to the right to the kitchen-door, glancing at herself in the mantelpiece-mirror as she pauses.*]

MRS. FISHER. What's the matter?

AMY. Nothing; Aubrey wants a drink of water. [*She goes out at the right.*]

MRS. FISHER [*With a significant sound*]. Oh.

AUBREY [*Coming out of the parlor*]. Stay right where you are, folks, right where you are. [*He moves to the mirror over the mantelpiece.*] Just a little social attention,—going right out

again on the next train. [*He surveys himself critically in the mirror, touching his tie and toupé gingerly. MRS. FISHER gives him a smouldering look, and JOE looks at his Father. AUBREY turns from the mirror, and indicates his reflection with a wide gesture.*] There you are, Mother! Any woman's fancy, what do you say? Even to the little old carnation. [*He gives the table a double tap with his knuckles, then laughs, and moves up towards the kitchen-door, and calls out to AMY.*] Come on, Amy, step on the United Gas out there; customer in here waiting for the old aqua pura. [*Moving down to MR. FISHER's right.*] Man's got to have something to drink—how about it, Pop? [*He gives MR. FISHER a slap on the right shoulder.*] You'll stay with me on that, won't you? [*He laughs and moves up to the mirror again. Old man FISHER is very much annoyed.*] Yes, sir. [*Coming forward again at the right.*] I want to tell those of you who have ventured out this evening, that this is a very pretty little picture of domestic felicity. [*He laughs a little and looks from one to the other, patronizingly; but nobody pays the slightest attention to him.*] Father reading,—Mother knitting; [*MRS. FISHER withers him with a quick look.*] But then, Mama is always knitting. [*She knits rapidly and AUBREY laughs, and moves up and across back of the table.*] And little old Tommy Edison over here, working eighteen hours a day to make the rich man richer and the poor man poorer. [*He gives JOE a tap on the back, then moves back again towards MR. FISHER.*] What about it, Popcorn? [*Slaps him on the back.*] Shake it up! Right or raving?

MR. FISHER [*Starting to his feet violently*]. God damn it, let me alone! And keep your hands to yourself. [*He crosses below the center-table and up to the hall-door.*] I never saw such a damn pest in my life! [*He goes up the stairs bristling with rage, and muttering to himself. AUBREY is vastly amused. He leans on the back of MR. FISHER's chair and roars with laughter.*]

AUBREY. Sign on the dotted line! And little old Popsy-Wopsy getting sore and going to leave us flat. [*He laughs again considerably; then turns to MRS. FISHER.*] Nevertheless, and notwithstanding, Mrs. Fisher, I'd like to mention that the kid from West Philadelphia is giving the growing boy the said and done. [*He indicates JOE with a waving gesture. AMY comes in from the right with a glass of water. He turns and acknowledges her with even a wider gesture.*] And there she is herself, and not a moving picture. [*AMY extends the glass of water, laughing, and with a touch of self-consciousness.*] Blushing as she gave it, looking down—at her feet so bare, and her tattered gown. [*AMY giggles, and her Mother looks sharply at AMY'S shoes. AUBREY takes the glass of water and turns to MRS. FISHER.*] How's that, Mother Fisher? Can't beat that little old Willie Shakespeare, can you? No, sir,—I'd like to tell the brothers that that little old Shakespeare party shook a wicked spear. [*He laughs at his own comedy, and AMY is immeasurably delighted.*] Well, here's laughter, ladies! and, [*Turning to JOE*] Mr. Marconi,—my best regards to you. [*He drinks.*]

AMY. I'm afraid it's not very cold. [*He just raises his hand, signifying that it's perfectly satisfactory.*]

MRS. FISHER. Why didn't you let it run?

AMY. I did, but it doesn't seem to get any colder.

AUBREY [*Handing the glass back to AMY*]. Very nice indeed. And a sweeter draught, from a fairer hand was never quaffed.

AMY [*Flipping her hand at him.*] Oh, you! [*She goes out at the right again with the empty glass.*]

AUBREY [*Laughing a bit*]. Thank you very much. [*He turns and moves across above the table towards JOE, drawing a gaily-bordered handkerchief from his breast-pocket and touching it to his lips.*] Yes, sir, Mr. Joseph, I want to tell you you're wasting time; for when you're all through, they'll offer you twenty cents for it, and sell it for twenty million [*He punctuates this last*

remark with a series of patronizing taps on JOE'S back—Take it or leave it—sign on the dotted line. [*He taps his knuckles on the table, and moves back again to MRS. FISHER'S left.*] Yes, sir,—that's exactly what they did to little old yours truly here. Twenty Lincoln Anacondas, for a formula that would have solved the greatest problem before the Industrial Chemical world to-day. [*AMY comes in from the right, and, looking at AUBREY wonderingly, moves across towards the left. AUBREY moves forward and across in front of the table towards JOE.*] A formula to prevent the rusting of iron and steel. [*JOE gets up and moves up and around above the table towards the kitchen-door at the right.*] A solution of Vanadium and Manganese, to be added to the metal in its molten state; [*JOE stops and looks back at him*] instead of applied externally as they have been doing.

JOE. What did you say, Aubrey?

AUBREY. I said, a simple combination of chemical elements, to be added to the metal in its *molten* state, instead of applied externally as they have been doing.

JOE and AUBREY, *speaking together.*

JOE [*Speaking to his Mother*]. Mom, do you know anything about that little screw-driver with the black handle?

AUBREY. But,—simply because it was discovered by a working-man—that they saw they couldn't buy—

MRS. FISHER. Do you mean the one you fixed the sewing machine with?

JOE and AUBREY, *speaking together.*

JOE. Yes, that little short one with the black handle.

AUBREY. They gave it the swinging door. [*AMY moves over to the parlor-doors.*]

MRS. FISHER and AUBREY, *speaking together.*

MRS. FISHER. I think I saw it on that shelf out there, over the sink. And now, don't go upsettin' everything out there.

AUBREY. They'd rather go on paying a million dollars a year

[JOE goes out, and AUBREY follows him to the kitchen-door]—to paint their steel and iron structures throughout the country, than pay me.

MRS. FISHER. Do you see it, Joe?

AUBREY [*Coming down to Mrs. FISHER's left*]. And do you know *why*, Mrs. Fisher?

JOE [*Answering his Mother from the kitchen*]. No!

AUBREY. Then, I'll tell you. Because I work for my living. That's the said and done on the whole business. [MRS. FISHER starts to put her things into the knitting-bag, preparatory to getting up.] Keep them poor and get them married; and then, [*He looks away off.*] as my darling old Mother used to say, "You've got them on their beams and hinges."

MRS. FISHER [*Getting up*]. I don't see that anybody's tryin' to make anybody get married if they don't want to. [*She passes up to the kitchen-door, putting her knitting-bag on the buffet as she goes*].

AUBREY [*Following her up*]. But they *do* want to, Mrs. Fisher, —but the capitalist wants to stop them.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning at the kitchen-door and speaking directly to him*]. Well, I guess it'd be just as well to stop some of 'em. [*She goes out.*]

AUBREY [*Calling after her through the kitchen-door*]. Ah, don't go back on little old William Jennings Bryan, Mother Fisher. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, you know. [*He turns and comes forward at the right again, laughing a little.*] Sign on the dotted line.

AMY [*Trying to conceal her temper*]. Come on in here, Aubrey.

AUBREY [*Starting towards her*]. Yes, sir, Amy, I want to tell you it's the poor man that gets it every time. I put a question up to Secretary Mellon, in a letter six weeks ago—that absolutely stumped him, because I haven't had a line from him since.

[AMY is smiling into his eyes. He passes in front of her and goes into the parlor. The curtain commences to descend slowly. AMY looks darkly toward the kitchen-door, and stamps her foot with temper; then follows AUBREY into the parlor.] I simply asked him to what extent his proposed program of Income Tax Revision would affect the great American Railroad Employé. [The curtain is down.]

THREE HOURS PASS

THE CURTAIN RISES AGAIN

MRS. FISHER is sitting at the right of the table asleep, her knitting lying in her lap; and JOE, sitting at the left of the table, is endeavoring to pass the tip of a wire through a small eyelet on the base-board. AMY starts to play the piano in the parlor; and, after the usual introduction, AUBREY begins to sing, "Rocked In the Cradle Of The Deep," in a heavy bass voice.

AUBREY [Singing].

"Rocked in the cradle of the deep,
I lay me down,—in peace to sleep—
Secure I rest upon the wave,
For Thou alone—

[MRS. FISHER starts slightly and wakens. JOE glances at her. AUBREY continues.]

has the power to save."

MRS. FISHER. Where'd you put it? What? Did you say something? [AUBREY continues to sing.]

JOE. Not a thing, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [Brushing back her hair]. I must have been dozin'.

JOE. You've been dead.

MRS. FISHER. What?

JOE. Since half-past nine. [MRS. FISHER becomes conscious of AUBREY singing.]

MRS. FISHER. What time is it now, Joe? [The singing becomes louder, and MRS. FISHER rises, with her eyes fastened on the parlor-door.] Is that him singin' in there?

JOE [Reaching into his belt-pocket for an Ingersoll watch]. The old Scientific American himself. A quarter of twelve.

MRS. FISHER. My God! what's he startin' to sing at this hour for! [She steps to the buffet at the right and puts her knitting-bag into one of the drawers.]

JOE. Talent should never be suppressed at any time, Mother.

MRS. FISHER. It's a wonder Amy wouldn't have sense enough to stop him. [She slams the buffet-drawer shut, and starts across towards the parlor-doors.] I never saw a man yet that didn't think he could sing. Put that thing away, now, Joe, you've been at it long enough. And see that that back is locked. I don't think Amy has any idea what time it is or she'd shut him up.

JOE. Let the young man express himself. [He gets up and crosses below the table towards the right, and up to the kitchen-door.]

MRS. FISHER. Oh, I wouldn't care if he bawled his head off, as far as I'm concerned—I'd be glad if he did; but I don't want him to waken your Father. [She steps up to the hall-door and listens, at the foot of the stairs.] And that's what he'll be doin' the first thing you know, and then the fat'll be in the fire for sure. [AUBREY reaches a high note, and JOE and his Mother stand looking at each other. Then JOE bursts out laughing.] Ain't that terrible, Joe? Do you think I ought to tell Amy what time it is?

JOE. No, give the boy a chance. [AUBREY finishes on a high note and holds it.] Hurray! [AUBREY can be heard applauding himself. JOE applauds, also.]

MRS. FISHER [Frantically, and going towards JOE]. Shush, Joe!

JOE [*Going out through the door at the right*]. Sign on the dotted line!

MRS. FISHER. Don't encourage him, for God's sake, Joe, he's bad enough as it is.

MR. FISHER [*Shouting from the head of the stairs*]. Josie!

MRS. FISHER [*Rushing back towards the hall-door on her tip-toes*]. Yes?

MR. FISHER. What the devil's goin' on down there! Do you know what time it is?

MRS. FISHER [*Trying to pacify him*]. Why, Joe was just cuttin' up here a minute ago.

MR. FISHER. What's Amy playin' the piano for, at this time of the night?

MRS. FISHER [*Trying not to be heard in the parlor*]. Why, her and Joe was just foolin'—

MR. FISHER. Damn funny kind of foolin', at this time of night! The neighbors'll be wonderin' what kind of a house we're keepin' here!

MRS. FISHER. Well, they've stopped it now, Neil.

MR. FISHER. Well, tell them to see that it's *kept* stopped! And get them lights out down there and go to bed! It's nearly twelve o'clock.

[MRS. FISHER *turns and looks at the parlor-doors. Then there's a burst of wild laughter from AUBREY. This decides MRS. FISHER. She steps resolutely towards the doors with the ostensible purpose of opening them, but, before she can reach the knob, the door is yanked open from the inside, and AMY steps out, looking resentfully at her.*]

AMY. What's the matter?

MRS. FISHER [*A trifle disconcerted*]. Why,—a—I was just comin' to tell you to be sure and put them lights out; I'm just goin' up—it's nearly twelve o'clock.

AUBREY [*Thrusting his head and shoulders out through the*

door]. I am also just about to take my reluctant leave, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER [*Trying to be polite*]. Well, I don't want to hurry you, but—

AUBREY. In fact, the recent outburst was in the nature of a farewell concert. [*He breaks into a wild laugh and draws back into the parlor; and MRS. FISHER, with a series of frantic gestures, intended to convey to AMY the imminence of her Father at the head of the stairs, steps back out of the range of the parlor-door. AMY makes an impatient movement of her body, and stamps her foot, then flounces into the parlor and slams the door.*] The little old song at twilight, you know, Mother Fisher—to soothe the savage breast. [*He gives vent to another gale of laughter; and MRS. FISHER stands petrified, expecting to hear her husband again.*]

MRS. FISHER [*As AUBREY'S laugh subsides*]. The damn fool! [*She crosses to the right to the kitchen-door and calls out to JOE.*] Joe!

JOE. Yeh?

MRS. FISHER. You'd better bring Gypsy Queen in and put her in the laundry there; she was shiverin' when I opened the door this mornin'. I think it's too cold for her on that back porch yet a while. [*She moves a little back towards the center of the room.*]

JOE [*Out at the right*]. Come on in here, Gypsy! Come on. [*He whistles.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Turning around to her left and looking back toward the kitchen-door*]. Ain't she there?

JOE. I don't see her.

MRS. FISHER [*Calling in a high voice*]. Where are you, Gypsy?

JOE. Here she is. Come on in here, Gypsy! Come on! That's the old gypsy kid. [*The door out at the right closes.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Going a step nearer the kitchen-door*]. Go into that laundry there, Gypsy.

JOE. Come back here, Gypsy!

MRS. FISHER. Make her go in there, Joe.

JOE [*Stamping his foot*]. Gypsy!

MRS. FISHER [*Stamping her foot at the kitchen-door*]. Go back there, Gypsy! You bad girl! And go into that laundry this minute—

JOE. There she goes.

MRS. FISHER. And don't let me hear a sound out of you when you get in there either, or I'll come right straight out and give you what I gave you last Sunday afternoon. [*A door closes.*] You better put the ketch on that door, Joe, or she'll be pushin' it open again; she wants to lay out here on this rug. [*Going nearer to the door again, and calling.*] Now, you remember what I told you, Gypsy; and don't let me have to speak to you again. [*Turning and moving across the room to the left.*] Your Father has her spoiled. [*A door out in the hallway at the left opens, and AMY can be heard laughing. MRS. FISHER stops dead in the middle of the room and listens.*]

AUBREY [*Calling from the hallway*]. Good-night, Mrs. Fisher. [*MRS. FISHER turns and darts back into the cellar-alcove at the right.*]

AMY [*In the hallway*]. I guess she's gone up, Aubrey.

AUBREY [*Coming in at the hall-door, poising on one toe, hat and cane in hand, and looking about the room*]. Montreal, Mother. [*MRS. FISHER flattens herself against the wall at the head of the cellar-stairs, and listens with a stoney expression.*]

AMY. I don't think she's in there, Aubrey.

AUBREY. And silence was her answer. [*He laughs wildly, turns, and starts out into the hallway again.*] Right you are, Amy—[*Glancing up the stairs*]. On the right side she is sleeping. [*He goes laughing out into the hallway.*]

JOE [*Coming in from the kitchen, mimicking AUBREY'S laugh.*] Ha! Ha! Ha! [*He passes his Mother without seeing her.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Coming out of the alcove.*]. Shush! Don't let him hear you, Joe. [*JOE turns and looks at his Mother, then continues across to the left to the hall-door.*]

JOE. Is he goin'?

MRS. FISHER [*Following JOE to the center of the room.*]. At last! [*JOE glances out into the hallway.*] Don't let him see you, now, Joe, or we'll have him here for another hour.

JOE [*Starting up the stairs.*]. I'm goin' to bed.

MRS. FISHER. Joe!

JOE [*Leaning back and looking.*]. What?

MRS. FISHER. Come here! [*AMY can be heard giggling in the hallway. JOE comes back to his Mother.*]

JOE. What?

MRS. FISHER [*Very confidentially.*]. What was that he was sayin' here to-night, about discoverin' something to keep rust out of iron and steel?

JOE [*Very much amused.*]. Wasn't that a scream.

MRS. FISHER. That's what you're always talkin' about, ain't it?

JOE. Yes, I was talkin' to *him* about it one night here, while he was waitin' for Amy to come down; and he's forgot where he heard it.

MRS. FISHER. Can you imagine!

JOE. I was wonderin' if you were gettin' that to-night.

MRS. FISHER. No, it never struck me till afterwards.

JOE [*With a shade of seriousness.*]. Did you get what he said tonight, Mom?

MRS. FISHER. Now, you know I never pay any attention to what *he* sez.

JOE [*Turning away laughing.*]. He's a bird. [*He goes to the hall-door and looks out into the hall.*]

MRS. FISHER. Don't let him see you, now, Joe.

JOE. The vestibule-door's shut. [*He goes up the stairs. His Mother follows him to the hall-door.*]

MRS. FISHER. You'd better close that window at the head of your bed, Joe, and not have it blowin' in on you all night. [*She glances out into the hallway, then steps to the parlor-door, opens it quietly and glances in, and starts across towards the right. The front-door closes out in the hallway, then the vestibule-door. Mrs. FISHER glances over her right shoulder toward the hallway, then continues to the kitchen-door. Just as she reaches the kitchen-door and glances out, the parlor-door is flung open and AMY comes in. She takes a couple of steps towards the middle of the room, then stands still, looking bitterly at her Mother. Mrs. FISHER speaks without looking at her.*]

Did you put that light out in there?

AMY [*In a quiet rage*]. That was a nice trick you people did tonight! [*Her Mother turns and looks at her.*]

MRS. FISHER. What?

AMY. Everybody walking out of the room, while Aubrey was talking.

MRS. FISHER. What did you *want* us to do, sit here all night listenin' to him?

AMY. You wouldn't have *had* to sit here all night listening to him; he was only in here five minutes.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving back towards the center-table*]. That's no thanks to him; he'd have been here till mornin' if somebody didn't do somethin'.

AMY [*Swinging to the mirror over the mantelpiece*]. I was never so mortified in my life.

MRS. FISHER [*Standing above the center-table*]. Oh, don't waste your sympathy, Amy! He don't have to have anybody listen to him; he'd talk to the wall if there wasn't anybody else around.

AMY [*Coming forward at her Mother's right*]. What did Pop get into such a temper about?

MRS. FISHER [*Getting mad*]. Because he hit him on the back!

AMY. That was a lot to get mad about.

MRS. FISHER. Well, he's always hittin' *somebody*!—on the back—or the shoulder—or someplace else. And your Father *said* the next time he did it he'd walk out of the room!—He can't say two words *together* without *hittin'* somebody someplace.

AMY. Well, I'll bet you won't get a chance to insult him *again*, Mom, I'll tell you that. [*She flounces down to the arm-chair at the extreme right.*]

MRS. FISHER. Then, let him stop his silly talk! and he won't get insulted. Sign on the dotted line! every two minutes. And talkin' about Shakespeare. [*She crosses to the parlor-door.*] What kind of goin' on is that for a sensible man. [*She slams the parlor-door shut, and moves up to the hall-door to listen for MR. FISHER.*] It's no wonder our Joe sez he's a nut!

AMY. Oh, everybody's a nut with the people around here!

MRS. FISHER [*Coming back towards the center-table*]. Oh, it ain't only the people around here that sez it; everybody that knows him sez it. [*AMY makes a sound of derisive amusement.*] You needn't laugh, for it's true.

AMY [*Turning sharply to her Mother*]. Who do you know that knows him?

MRS. FISHER. I know Frank Hyland. [*AMY is puzzled for the fraction of a second.*]

AMY. You mean Clara's husband?

MRS. FISHER. Yes, I mean Clara's husband.

AMY. Oh, don't make up a lie, Mom! Frank Hyland never saw Aubrey Piper.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, didn't he!

AMY. No, he didn't.

MRS. FISHER. Well now, my lady, you're so smart, he knows him better than you do.

AMY. I don't believe it.

MRS. FISHER. Doesn't matter whether you believe it or not, he knows him just the same; he's been lookin' at him for years, down at that restaurant at Fifteenth and Arch, where he eats his lunch. And he sez he's as crazy as a *bass*-singer.

AMY [*Whirling on her Mother*]. I suppose that's what Clara was here to tell you, was it?

MRS. FISHER. What does it matter *who* was here to tell it, Amy, if it's true.

AMY [*Stepping up close to her Mother*]. Well now, listen, Mom, I want to tell you something right now! You tell our Clara for me the next time you see her, to mind her own damn business—[*She taps the back of the chair twice with her knuckles, emphasizing the words "damn" and "business"*] as far as Aubrey Piper is concerned.

MRS. FISHER [*Before AMY has finished speaking*]. Oh, don't fly into a temper, if anybody speaks to you! [*She turns and crosses hurriedly to the hall-door to listen.*]

AMY [*Stamping her foot*]. Well then, don't speak to me about things that *put* me in a temper!

MRS. FISHER. You're not frightenin' anybody around here. [*She looks up the stairs and listens.*]

AMY. No, and nobody around here is frightening *me*, either—Our Clara took who *she* wanted. And I guess you took who *you* wanted. [MRS. FISHER *moves steadily forward at the left to a point in front of the lower left-hand corner of the center-table.*] And if I want Aubrey Piper I'll take *him*!

MRS. FISHER [*Taking AMY's tone*]. Well, take him then!—and the sooner the better; for it's a pity to spoil two houses with you. [*She leans forward a little on the table and speaks with a steady precision.*] Only remember this, Amy,—if you *do* take

him,—be sure that you keep him—and that—he—keeps—you. [AMY looks at her keenly.] And don't be comin' around here cryin' for your *Pop* to keep you.

AMY [With a sound of amused derision, and flouncing down to the arm-chair at the right]. Don't make me laugh.

MRS. FISHER. You can laugh all you like; there's a lot of that kind of laughin' goin' on these days. But they change their tune as soon as the rent begins to come due; and it's the Mothers and Fathers that has to listen to the changed tune. But nothin'll do but they'll get married.

AMY [Pinning her Mother with a quick look]. You got married, didn't you?

MRS. FISHER. Yes I did.

AMY [Turning away again]. Well—

MRS. FISHER. To a man that was able to keep me.

AMY [Back to her Mother again]. And how do you know that Aubrey Piper wouldn't be able to keep his wife?

MRS. FISHER. Because I know what he earns;—[She strikes the table with her fist] and it isn't enough.

AMY [Stamping her foot]. Oh, don't go making up things, Mom!—You don't know anything about what he earns.

MRS. FISHER [With measured emphasis]. He earns a hundred and fifty dollars a month and not a penny more, for Frank Hyland sez so.

AMY. What does Frank Hyland know about it?

MRS. FISHER. He knows what he does!—His business takes him in there all the time.

AMY. And what does he say he does?

MRS. FISHER. Why, he sez he's a clerk, of course,—[AMY makes a sound of amusement] like a hundred others down there.

AMY. That shows how much he knows about it.

MRS. FISHER. But I suppose he told you he owns the Pennsylvania Railroad.

AMY. Well, I'd take his word before I'd take Frank Hyland's.
[*Her Mother looks at her narrowly, and there is a pause.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Significantly*]. Why would you take *his* word before you would take Frank Hyland's?

AMY. Well, why shouldn't I?

MRS. FISHER [*Losing her temper*]. Because he's a fool!—of a blatherskite.

AMY. That's only your opinion, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. It's the opinion of everybody that ever listened to him. But you'd believe *him* before you'd believe the word of a steady sensible man.

AMY. I don't know anything about Frank Hyland.

MRS. FISHER. You know he's been your brother-in-law for five years; and what do you know about this other clown?

AMY. Well, what do you *want* to know about him?

MRS. FISHER. I don't want to know *anything* about him; I *know* all I want to know about him. But before I'd get the name of havin' a fellow comin' to see *me* steady, there's a few things I'd want to know about him, I'll tell you that. [*She turns away and takes a step towards the back of the room.*]

AMY. I've told you where he lives and where he works,—what else do you want to know about him?

MRS. FISHER. There's no use talkin' to you, Amy.

AMY. No, and there's no use talking to you, either.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to her sharply*]. This fellow's got you so crazy mad about him, that I believe you'd take him if you knew he had a wife and family somewhere, and not two cents in his pocket. [*She moves towards the mantelpiece at the back, removing her spectacles.*]

AMY. Well, I guess we'd get along some way even if I did.

MRS. FISHER. All right.

AMY. Everybody else does.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning upon AMY in a rage, and wiping the*

glasses in her apron]. That's the kind of talk that leaves them livin' in garrets! And back at their jobs ten days after the weddin'.

AMY. Oh, you talk as though everybody that was married was starving to death.

MRS. FISHER [*Lifting the glasses towards AMY with a quiet, knowing gesture*]. There are ways of starvin' to death, Amy, besides not gettin' enough to eat. [*With a change to great shrewdness of tone and manner.*] And the funny part of it is, Amy,—like a lot of others, you're very shrewd about money while you're at home, as far as what you give your Mother and Father is concerned; but the minute some clown, with a flower in his coat and patent-leather shoes, winks at you, you seem to forget there's such a thing in the world as a ton of coal. [*Crossing suddenly above the table towards AMY in quite a surge of temper.*] And then it's just as Clara sez, it's your *people* that has to come to the rescue.

AMY [*Furiously*]. I wish I'd been here while she was talking! I bet I'd a told her a thing or two!

MRS. FISHER. Oh, you needn't try to turn it onto Clara;—she wasn't talkin' at all.

AMY [*Stamping her foot*]. She *must* have been talking!

MRS. FISHER. She simply asked me where you were!—and I told her you were gettin' dressed—that this fellow was comin' here to-night: so then she told me that Frank Hyland knew him, and where he worked, and what he got and all about him. [*She turns away and moves to the left. There is a slight pause.*]

AMY [*Half crying*]. I'd just take him for *spite* now. [*MRS. FISHER comes to a stop, and turns slowly—and looks at her.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, let me tell *you*, Amy—the day a girl that's used to spendin' money the way you do, takes a thirty-five-dollar-a-week man,—the only one she's spitin' is herself. [*She moves slowly to the mantelpiece at the back and puts her glasses down*

definitely, then turns and starts to remove her apron.] There'll be no more permanent waves after that—[She rolls her apron up.] you can make up your mind to that. [She flings the rolled apron onto the sofa at the right of the mantelpiece, and commences to unfasten the old-fashioned brooch in the front of her house-dress.] Nor fifty-five dollar beaded dresses, neither.

AMY [*In a crying temper*]. Well, I'd never bother anybody around here if I needed anything, I'll tell you that.

MRS. FISHER. Maybe you won't.

AMY. I won't,—you needn't worry.

MRS. FISHER [*With a bitter levelness*]. Time'll tell that, Lady Jane; I've heard the likes of you before. [*She detaches the brooch and goes to the hall-door, glances out into the hallway, then turns and looks back at AMY.*] Put out that light and go to bed, it's twelve o'clock. [*She goes up the stairs. AMY stands for a second, fuming, over at the right; then she swings suddenly to the middle of the room and stops, with her hands on her hips, irresolute. Then she comes forward and stands above the table, thinking. As she clasps her hands together she becomes conscious of the ring in her hand. She tiptoes to the hall-door, stands listening for a second, then looks up. Then she hurries back to the center-table, looks at the ring, slides it onto the third finger of her left hand and holds it so that the diamond will catch the light from the chandelier. But, the reflection is evidently unsatisfactory; so, with a furtive glance toward the hall-door, she shifts her position to a point nearer the table-lamp and holds her hand so that the ring will reflect that light. The curtain commences to descend slowly; and she stands, holding her hand at arm's length, lost in the melting wonder of her engagement ring.]*

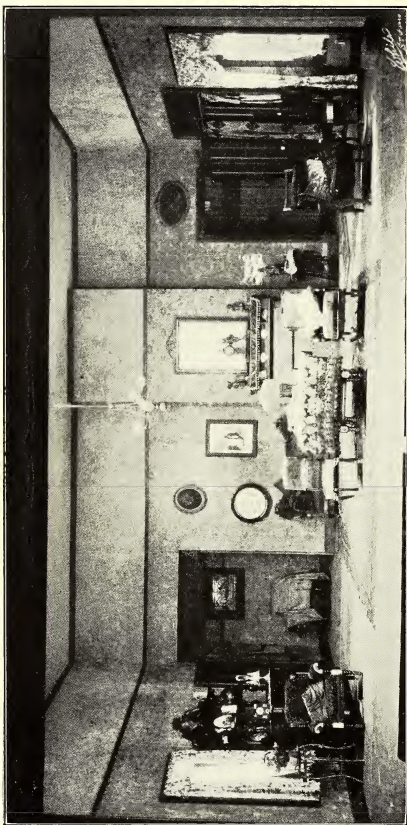
THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

SECOND ACT

THE SHOW-OFF

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U O P P L I C A T I O N S



THE STAGE OF THE PLAYHOUSE, NEW YORK, SET FOR THE SHOW OFF.

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE: *Same as preceding Act, six months later, about five-thirty on a Monday afternoon. MRS. FISHER is sitting in the arm-chair below the buffet, over at the right, listening in on the radio. Suddenly the front-door closes with a bang, and she starts, and looks in the direction of the hall-door. AUBREY bounces into the room, very much done up, with the traditional carnation, as usual, and comes forward, putting his hat down on the table.*

AUBREY. Hello, Mother—Amy here? [*He steps to the mirror at the back and gives himself a critical touch here and there.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Commencing to remove the listeners*]. Our Amy?

AUBREY. Yes, have you seen anything of her?

MRS. FISHER [*Rising*]. No, I haven't seen anything of her. [*She places the listeners on the buffet, and signs off.*]

AUBREY [*Turning from the glass*]. Wonder where she is?

MRS. FISHER. Isn't she home?

AUBREY. No, I just came by there.

MRS. FISHER [*Picking up her knitting-bag from the buffet*]. She hasn't been here today.

AUBREY. She was saying this morning she thought she'd go out looking for a house today; I suppose she hasn't got back yet. [*He gives the chair at the left of the center-table a double tap with his cane as he crosses down to the window at the left.*] I wanted to take her out to the Automobile Show tonight; I got the loan of Harry Albright's car.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving to the chair at the right of the center-table*]. Did you say she was out lookin' for a house?

AUBREY [*Moving back, towards her*]. Yes, we've got to get

out of that place we're in. The LePage printing people have bought the whole block: they're going to put up a new building there.

MRS. FISHER [*Standing with her hand on the back of the chair*]. How soon do you have to get out?

AUBREY. Soon as we can find a place, I suppose. I understand they want to begin tearing down there about the first of the year.

MRS. FISHER. I'm afraid you won't find it so easy to get a place as reasonable as that again in a hurry. [*She sits down.*]

AUBREY. I don't *want* a place as reasonable as that, if I can get something better. [*He plants himself at the left of the table and looks away off, with a dreamy narrowing of his eyes, and balancing himself on his toes.*] I want a home—something with a bit of ground around it—where I can do a bit of tennis in the evening—[*He makes a couple of leisurely passes at an imaginary tennis-ball*] if I feel like it.

MRS. FISHER [*Beginning to knit on a green sweater*]. Well, if you do you'll pay for it.

AUBREY. That is exactly what I expect to do, Mother Fisher, not giving you a short answer,—that is exactly what I expect to do. [*He gives the table a double tap with the cane.*] But, I want what I'm paying for, I'll tell you that. No more of the old first-of-the-month business for this bambino. He's all washed up, and signed on the dotted line. [*He moves up to the mirror at the back.*]

MRS. FISHER. They're not puttin' *up* any more houses, from what I can hear.

AUBREY. Be yourself, now, Mother Fisher, be yourself.

MRS. FISHER. Well, where *are* they?

AUBREY. You ought to go out along the Boulevard some Sunday,—see what they're doing out there.

MRS. FISHER. Well, there's no danger of you goin' out along the Boulevard, except for a walk.

AUBREY [*Moving to the hall-door and glancing out into the hallway*]. Lot of people out that way, Mother.

MRS. FISHER. Well, if there is they're payin' more than you're able to pay.

AUBREY. Man's got to live somewhere, Mother. [*He swings forward to the window down at the left, and stands whistling to the canary.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, if he's wise, he'll live where he's able to pay for it;—unless he wants to be breakin' up half a dozen times a year—like a lot of them are doin'. Makin' a big show. Buyin' ten thousand dollar houses, and puttin' fifty dollars down on them. [*He turns to her.*] Besides, you haven't got any furniture for a house, even if you got one—unless you want to be sittin' on the floor.

AUBREY. The matter of furniture nowadays, Little Mother, is a very inconsequential item, from what I can gather.

MRS. FISHER. You ought to price it sometime when you're in the city, and see how unconsequent it is.

AUBREY [*Settling himself for a golf shot, using his cane for a club*]. I've investigated the matter very thoroughly, Mrs. Fisher, and I find that there are at least fifteen first-class establishments right here in this city that will furnish a man's house from garget to garage, and give him the rest of his life to pay for it. [*He hits the imaginary golf-ball, and pretends to follow it straight out with his eyes.*]

MRS. FISHER. They'd need to give some of them the rest of their lives, at the rate they're goin' now.

AUBREY. Give the growing boy a chance, Mrs. Fisher, give the growing boy a chance. You know what Mr. L. D. Brophy of the American Can Company said in the September number of the American Magazine, don't you?

MRS. FISHER. No, I don't.

AUBREY. Well, I'll tell you. [*MRS. FISHER shifts her knitting,*

giving him a wearied glance.] He said, "I would say, to that innumerable host of young men, standing on the threshold of life, uncertain, and, mayhap, dismayed—as they contemplate the stress of modern industrial competition, 'Rome was not built in a day'." Those were his very words, I wouldn't kid you, and I think the old boy's got it right, if you ask me. [*He moves up to the hall-door again and glances out.*]

MRS. FISHER. What are you goin' out to the Automobile Show for?

AUBREY [*Turning and coming forward again*]. Repeat the question, Mrs. Fisher, if you please.

MRS. FISHER. I say, what are you goin' out to the *Automobile* Show for?

AUBREY [*Coming to a point above the center-table*]. Ha! Married five months ago today, Mother; got to celebrate the happy event. Besides, one never knows what a day will bring, in the way of an opportunity to satisfy a long-felt want. And since she knocks but once—[*He taps his cane on the table, causing MRS. FISHER to start slightly.*] at each man's door, the kid here doesn't want to miss his chance by any uncertainty as to just what choo-choo he prefers. [*MRS. FISHER turns with an annoyed expression, to find him pointing at her with his forefinger and thumb. He laughs at her annoyance.*] Well, got to run along now, Mother, and see if Amy's back at the house yet. [*He picks up his hat from the table and starts for the hall-door.*]

MRS. FISHER. What'll I'll tell her if she comes here after you're gone?

AUBREY [*Stopping at the door*]. Why, tell her I've got the loan of Harry Albright's car, and I want her to see that new Jordan Six that I was telling her about, out at the Show. And that I'll be at Childs' at Fifteenth and Chestnut until eight o'clock. [*He looks at his Ingersoll.*]

MRS. FISHER. Fifteenth and Chestnut?

AUBREY. That's the said and done, Mother. [*He laughs boisterously.*] The old Café Infante. [*He laughs again.*] Olive oil, Mother. [*He goes out the hall-door, breaking into another laugh, and in a second the front-door closes with a bang, causing MRS. FISHER to start again, and look irritatedly toward the hall-door. Then she resumes her knitting. The parlor-door opens and AMY drifts in, and starts across towards the chair at the left of the table.*]

AMY. Hello! [*MRS. FISHER starts again.*]

MRS. FISHER. Oh, you frightened me, Amy—walkin' in that way like a ghost! When did you come in?

AMY [*Sitting down, with a wearied air.*] A couple of minutes ago—I've been in the parlor.

MRS. FISHER. Why, your man just left here, didn't you see him?

AMY. No, I heard him when I came in—I went in the parlor.

MRS. FISHER. He's lookin' for you—He sez he wants you to go to some kind of an Automobile Show with him.

AMY. I know; I don't want to go; I'm too tired.

MRS. FISHER. What's he doin' about his supper?

AMY. I told him this morning to get something in town; I knew I wouldn't be home till late. [*MRS. FISHER resumes her knitting; and there is a slight pause.*]

MRS. FISHER. He sez you've got to get out of that place you're in.

AMY. Yes, they're going to tear those houses down. That's what I was doing today—looking around for someplace.

MRS. FISHER. Did you see anything?

AMY. I saw a couple of places that were fair, but they want too much money.

MRS. FISHER. I'm afraid that's what you'll find, Amy, wherever you go.

AMY. Thirty-eight dollars a month—for a little two-story house—that didn't even have a front porch.

MRS. FISHER. Well, you're surely not lookin' for a house, Amy, are you?

AMY. Yes, if I can find one.

MRS. FISHER. And have you any idea what they're askin' for houses these days?

AMY. Well, Aubrey sez he *will* not live in rooms any longer.

MRS. FISHER. What the devil does it matter *what he sez*! He don't know what he's sayin' half the time, anyway. It's *you* that has to stretch the money, and it'll only go so far; and the money that *he* gets won't cover any forty-dollar rents, you can make up your mind to that right now, before you go any further. And that's what you'll be asked to pay, Amy, remember I'm tellin' you.

AMY. He doesn't want to pay rent—he wants to buy.

MRS. FISHER. What on, thirty-two dollars a week?

AMY. He sez he can put it into a new building society that he heard about, over in Frankford.

MRS. FISHER. Wouldn't he have to pay the building society?

AMY. Well, he wouldn't have to pay it all at once.

MRS. FISHER. There'd be more onces than he'd be able to meet. I thought *you* had a *little* sense, but you're nearly as bad as him.

AMY. No, but you talk awfully silly, Mother; you'd think everybody that was married was living out in the street.

MRS. FISHER. That's where a good many of them would be livin', Amy, only that somebody belongin' to them is givin' them a hand. Money'll only go so far, and I've been keepin' house too long not to know just how far that far is. Nobody can tell *me*.

AMY. There was a girl down in our office that was married, just before I was married, and the fellow she married didn't even get as much money as Aubrey gets; he got about twenty-five a week—he was a guard in the Corn Exchange Bank; and

they bought a house, out in Kensington, and they say it's beautiful.

MRS. FISHER. She's back at her job, though, isn't she?

AMY [*With reluctant admission*]. She never left her job.

MRS. FISHER. Well,—that's how she's doin' it. You told me yourself there were five girls in your office that have married within the last two years. Do you think they're hanging over books nine hours a day because they *like* it? And you haven't got any furniture even if you got a house.

AMY. Oh, you can always get furniture.

MRS. FISHER. You can if you pay for it. And I don't know how you expect to do all these wonders later on, when you find it so hard to make ends meet now, with only the rent of two rooms to pay for. You're everlastin' borrowin' from me as it is.

AMY. I always pay you, don't I?

MRS. FISHER. You do when you get it. But, that's not the point, Amy; it's that what you get one week don't last you till the next.

AMY. The reason I was short last week, Aubrey bought that new overcoat.

MRS. FISHER. And next week it'll be something else.

AMY. Well, a man can't be shabby, Mom, in a position like Aubrey's. He sez he's got nearly eighty clerks down there in his department; and he sez unless he sets some kind of an example of personal appearance, he sez there are some of them down there that'd come in in overalls.

MRS. FISHER [*Laying her knitting on the table and looking keenly at AMY*]. How is it, Amy, that a girl like you—that was smart enough to keep books, has so little sense when it comes to what some man tells you? [*AMY looks at her Mother steadily.*]

AMY. Who do you mean, Aubrey?

MRS. FISHER. Yes.

AMY. Why, what does he tell me that I have so little sense about?

MRS. FISHER. That he has eighty clerks under him.

AMY. So he has.

MRS. FISHER. And gets thirty-two dollars a week?

AMY. He gets thirty-two fifty. [MRS. FISHER resumes her knitting, shaking her head hopelessly.] Well now, Mom, you know yourself what the Pennsylvania Railroad pays its men.

MRS. FISHER. I don't know what anybody pays anybody.

AMY. Well, the Pennsylvania Railroad is notorious. Aubrey sez that only that a couple of things haven't panned out just right with him, he'd have left them *long* ago. He sez they just try to break your spirit. He sez that's one of the main reasons why he pays so much attention to his clothes.—He sez he just wouldn't *please* them.

MRS. FISHER. How much did he pay for that overcoat?

AMY. Twenty-eight dollars. [MRS. FISHER raises her eyes to Heaven.] Oh, he didn't have to pay it all at once; the man said on account of it being so near Christmas he could let it go till the first of February.

MRS. FISHER. I guess he'll be wantin' a suit, now, the first you know, to go with the overcoat.

AMY. No, his suit's all right,—yet a while. But this suit of mine is beginning to go; I've worn it till I'm tired looking at it.

MRS. FISHER. People can't *get* things so handy once they're married.

AMY. I thought I'd be able to put something away out of this week, toward a suit; but I don't know where the money went to:—it just seemed to go. Honestly, I had exactly *twelve cents* in my purse when Aubrey gave me his pay.

MRS. FISHER. I don't know what'll become of you, Amy, if ever you have a houseful of children to keep. [AMY sits looking at nothing, with a rather troubled expression about the eyes, and

her Mother continues to knit. Suddenly AMY bursts into tears. MRS. FISHER looks at her: then she gets up quietly, laying her knitting on the table, and crosses in front of the table to her—and lays her hand on her arm.] Now, there's no use a startin' that kind a thing, now, Amy; for it won't do you a bit of good. [*She continues across.*]

AMY. I don't know what I'm going to do, Mom—I'm nearly crazy.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning*]. I'll tell you what you're goin' to do, Amy, if you're a wise woman—You're goin' to realize that you're married; and that you've got some kind of a house to keep up; and just how much money you're goin' to get each week to keep it up *on*; and then suit your ideas accordin'. And if you don't, you'll have plenty of cryin' to do. And you'll have nobody to thank but yourself, for you had nothing but impudence for them that tried to tell you—how many beans made five. [*The front-door is heard to close.*] I guess this is your Father. Go into the parlor there, and don't let him see you cryin'. [*AMY rises and steps quickly across and thru the parlor-doors at the left into the parlor; and MRS. FISHER crosses above the center-table to the buffet and puts her knitting into one of the drawers. CLARA appears in the hall-door.*]

CLARA. What's the matter? [*MRS. FISHER turns and looks at her.*]

MRS. FISHER. There's nothing at all the matter.

CLARA. What did Joe telephone me for?

MRS. FISHER. *Our* Joe, do you mean?

CLARA. Yes; Bertha said he telephoned the house about four o'clock and told her to tell me to come right over home as soon as I came in.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I'm sure *I* don't know what he'd want you for, Clara; he didn't leave any word with me for you this morning.

CLARA [*Coming forward towards the center-table*]. I was over paying my Electric, and just got back; so I came right over; I thought maybe something was wrong here, and he was calling from next door.

MRS. FISHER. No, he hasn't been home here today. [CLARA *puzzles for a second, then tosses her purse onto the table.*]

CLARA. I wonder what he wanted me for. [*She turns to the mirror at the back and touches her hat.*]

MRS. FISHER. Is that girl at your house sure it was our Joe?

CLARA [*Coming back to the table*]. She said it was; and I suppose she knows his voice,—she's often answered the 'phone when he's called. [*She picks up a book from the table and glances casually at it.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, maybe he wants to see you about something; I'd wait a while; he'll be here at six.

CLARA [*Looking suddenly at her Mother*]. Maybe he's heard some news about that formula that those people are interested in.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming over to the table*]. Oh, I guess he'll be an old man before he ever hears anything from that. [*She folds and settles various things on the table, and CLARA glances through the book. Then, as she moves over to settle the upper left-hand corner of the table-cover, she gives CLARA a little push.*] Look out of my way, Clara, till I fix this cloth. [CLARA *just moves without looking up from the book.*] That's a book Joe brought home last night: about that woman that was left up on the North Pole. He sez it's very nice. I've got to put those potatoes on, for your Father's supper; he'll be here around six. [*She moves to the door at the right.*]

CLARA [*Standing at the left of the table, still looking at the book*]. Did you know that Amy's got to get out of those rooms she's in?

MRS. FISHER [*From the kitchen*]. Yes.

CLARA. They're going to tear those houses down.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming back into the room*]. So she was telling me.

CLARA [*Moving to the chair at the left of the table*]. What's she going to do, [*Tossing the book onto the table*] come in here to live? [*She sits down.*]

MRS. FISHER. Now, that's a sensible question for you to ask, Clara;—you know how much she's comin' in here to live.

CLARA [*Commencing to remove her gloves*]. I don't know where else she'll go,—with rents the way they are now;—unless she goes back to work.

MRS. FISHER. She'll have to look around.

CLARA. What good will it do her to look around—she certainly won't find anything as reasonable as where she is now: and when she's not able to pay that, how does she expect to pay any more? [*The parlor-door is whipped open and AMY is standing between the curtains looking tight-lipped at CLARA.*]

AMY. How do you know I'm not able to pay my rent where I am?

MRS. FISHER [*Moving towards the hall-door*]. Now, don't start a fight, Amy, your Pop'll be in here any minute. [*She looks out into the hallway.*]

AMY [*Speaking to her Mother, and indicating CLARA with a gesture*]. No, but I'd like to know what business it is of hers whether I can pay my rent or not. I don't see that anybody's asking her to pay it for me.

CLARA [*Very sure of her ground*]. It's a bit late in the day to talk that way, Amy; your husband's been to Frank Hyland twice already to pay it for you. [*AMY looks at her aghast, and MRS. FISHER comes forward between them.*] It's time you quit this posing in front of me; I know how you're fixed better than you do yourself. [*She turns sharply away and flings her gloves onto the table.*]

AMY [*Almost crying*]. Now, do you hear that, Mom!

MRS. FISHER. Stop your talk, Amy! Do you want your Father to walk in and hear you?

AMY [*Lowering her voice, but still speaking with angry rapidity*]. She sez that Aubrey Piper's been to Frank Hyland twice, for the loan of *our* rent.

CLARA. So he has.

AMY. You're a liar! [MRS. FISHER gives her a slap on the back; and there is a vibrant pause. Then AMY moves down towards the window at the left and bursts out crying.]

MRS. FISHER [*With controlled excitement*]. Will you stop when I speak to you! [There is a pause.] What kind of talk do you call that! [She steps to the hall-door again and glances out into the hallway.]

AMY [*Whirling again upon CLARA*]. Well, that's what she is! Aubrey Piper never asked Frank Hyland for a cent in his life.

CLARA. He's asked him a dozen times, and got it, too; till I put a stop to it.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming forward again, and speaking with authority*]. Now, that'll do, Clara!—I don't want to hear another word—out of either one of you—I had enough of that when the two of you were at home.

AMY. Well, I'll make her prove what she sez about Aubrey Piper, just the same!

CLARA. It's very easily proved. Just come over to the house some night and I'll show you a few of his letters.

AMY. What do you do, open them?

CLARA. I do now, yes,—since I found out who they're from.

MRS. FISHER [*Keenly*]. Do you mean to tell me, Clara, that he's writin' to Frank Hyland for money?

AMY. No, he doesn't do anything of the kind, Mom, that's another of her lies!

MRS. FISHER [*Before AMY has finished speaking*]. I'm not talkin' to you, Amy.

AMY. She just makes those things up.

CLARA. I make them *up!*

AMY [*Crying*]. Yes!

CLARA. And I've got at least twelve letters right in my bureau-drawer this minute that he's written within the last two months.

MRS. FISHER. What does he write letters for?

CLARA. For money—so he can pay seven dollars for a seat out at the football game—as he did Thanksgiving afternoon,—Frank saw him there.

MRS. FISHER. Why don't he just ast Frank Hyland for the money when he sees him, instead of writin' to him?

CLARA. I suppose he thinks a written request is more appropriate, coming from one of the heads of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

MRS. FISHER. How much does he ast for, when he asts him?

CLARA. There was one a couple of weeks ago, for three hundred. [*AMY makes a sound of bitter amusement, and turns away.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Aghast*]. Three hundred dollars?

CLARA. That's what the letter said. [*MRS. FISHER turns and looks at AMY.*]

MRS. FISHER. What would he have wanted three hundred dollars for, Amy?

AMY. Oh, ask her, Mom; she's good at making things up. [*She sweeps towards the parlor-doors.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Taking a step or two after her*]. Oh, you wouldn't believe it, even if it was true, if it was against him.

AMY. Well, I wouldn't believe *her*, anyway. [*AMY slams the parlor-door with a bang.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Raising her voice*]. You wouldn't believe your

own Mother,—never name your sister. [*She turns to CLARA.*] She flew at *me* like a wild-cat, when I told her he wore a wig. I guess she knows it herself by this time.

CLARA. She's for *him*, Mom; and the sooner you get that into your head the better.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving towards the right, above the table*]. I know very well she is, you needn't tell me. And she'd turn on everyone belongin' to her for him. The idea of askin' anybody for three hundred dollars. [*She continues towards the kitchen-door, fuming; then turns.*] I suppose he wanted to buy an automobile or something. That's where he is tonight, out at the Automobile Show—and not two cents in his pocket—like a lot of others that'll be out there I guess—And I'll bet he'll be doin' more talk out there than them that'll buy a dozen cars.

CLARA. I think that's what he *did* want the money for.

MRS. FISHER. It wouldn't surprise me,—the damned fool. [*She steps to the mantelpiece and glances out into the hallway.*] It'd be fitter for him to be thinkin' about gettin' a house to live in.

CLARA. He doesn't think he *needs* to think about that; he thinks he's coming in here.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning sharply, on her way back to the kitchen-door*]. Comin' in here to *live*, do you mean?

CLARA. That's what he told Frank, the day before yesterday.

MRS. FISHER. Well, he's very much mistaken if he does, I can tell you that. I'd like to be listenin' to that fellow seven days in the week. I'd rather go over and live with your Aunt Ellie in Newark.

CLARA [*Rising, and picking up her gloves from the table*]. Well, that's about what you'll have to do, Mom, if you ever let them in on you. [*She stands looking straight out, unfastening her neck-piece.*]

MRS. FISHER. I won't let them in on me, don't fret. Your Father 'ud have something to say about that.

CLARA [*Slipping off her neck-piece*]. Pop may not always be here, Mom. [*She turns around to her left and moves to a point above the table, and puts her fur and gloves down.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, I'll be here, if he isn't; and the furniture is mine. And there's very little danger of my walkin' off and leavin' it to any son-in-law. [*The front-door closes.*] I guess this is your Pop now, and I haven't even got the kettle on. [*She hurries out at the right.* CLARA glances at the hall-door, and JOE appears in it, and stands for the fraction of a second, irresolute.]

JOE. Where's Mom?

CLARA. Out in the kitchen,—why?

JOE [*Motioning to her, causing the paper to drop from his hand*]. Come here,—don't let her hear you. [*CLARA steps towards him, with a shade of apprehension in her face and manner.*] Listen, Clara—Pop had some kind of a stroke this afternoon at his work.

CLARA. Pop did?

JOE. They found him layin' in front of one of the boilers.

CLARA. Oh, my God!

JOE. I tried to get you on the 'phone about four o'clock.

CLARA. I know—I came right over as soon as I came in.

JOE. You better tell Mom. [*He starts for the stairs, and CLARA turns towards the kitchen-door.*]

CLARA [*Turning sharply back again*]. Joe!

JOE [*Stopping abruptly on the first step of the stairs*]. What?

CLARA. Where's Pop now?

JOE. They took him to the Samaritan Hospital. I just came from there—they telephoned me to the office.

CLARA. Well, is he very bad?

JOE. I think he's done.

CLARA. Oh, don't say that, Joe!

JOE. That's what the Doctor at the Hospital sez.—He hasn't regained consciousness since three o'clock. So you'd better tell Mom to get her things on and go right down there. I've got to change my clothes; I went right up there from work. [*He starts up the stairs; and CLARA moves vaguely towards the kitchen-door. She stops and stands looking toward the kitchen in a controlled panic of indecision. Then, abruptly she whirls round and steps quickly back to the hall-door.*]

CLARA [*In a subdued voice*]. Joe!

JOE. What?

CLARA. That Samaritan Hospital's at Broad and Ontario, isn't it?

JOE. Yes. [*She turns slowly and looks out, irresolute. Then she stoops down abstractedly and picks up the newspaper that JOE dropped. The parlor-door opens sharply and AMY stands looking at her apprehensively. Their eyes meet.*]

AMY. What is it? [*MRS. FISHER appears in the door at the right, drying an agate-ware plate.*]

MRS. FISHER. Wasn't that your Pop that came in, Clara? [*CLARA makes a deft, silencing gesture with her left hand to AMY, and moves towards the center-table.*]

CLARA. No, it wasn't, Mom, it was the boy with the paper.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming further into the room to see the clock*]. I wonder what's keepin' him; he's late to-night. [*CLARA leans against the center-table, keeping her face averted from her Mother.*] He's nearly always here before this. [*She moves back again towards the kitchen.*]

AMY [*Crossing quickly down to CLARA'S left*]. What is it, Clara?

MRS. FISHER [*Turning and looking at CLARA*]. What's the matter with her? [*CLARA tries to control her feelings.*]

AMY. I don't know what's the matter with her, Mom! Some-thing Joe just told her—he's just gone upstairs.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming forward apprehensively at CLARA'S right*]. What is it, Clara,—somethin' about your Father? Is that what you're cryin' for?

AMY. Why don't you tell her, Clara?

MRS. FISHER. Go to the foot of the stairs, Amy, and call Joe. [*AMY steps towards the foot of the stairs.*] Something's happened to your Father, I know it.

CLARA [*Moving a step or two towards her Mother*]. Now, it's nothing to get upset about, Mom; he just took a little spell of some kind at his work this afternoon, and they had to take him to the hospital. [*AMY comes forward eagerly, and crosses to a point below the table*]. Joe just came from there, and he sez we'd better get our things on right away and go down there. [*MRS. FISHER sways a step forward, letting the agate-ware plate slide from her hands to the floor. AMY steps towards her Mother, lifting the chair from the right of the table and guiding her Mother into it.*] Here, sit down here, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*Slightly dazed*]. What is it she's sayin' happened to your Father, Amy? [*AMY passes back of the chair to her Mother's right, and CLARA comes to her left.*]

CLARA. Now, it's nothing to get excited about, Mom; it might be just a little heart-attack or something that he took. [*She takes the towel from her Mother's hand and hands it to AMY.*] Put this over there. [*AMY turns to the buffet.*]

MRS. FISHER. There was never anything the matter with your Father's heart, Clara.

CLARA. Well, it's pretty hot in there where he works, you know that. [*MRS. FISHER shakes her head up and down, knowingly.*] And men at Pop's age are always taking little spells of some kind.

MRS. FISHER [*With a long, heavy sigh*]. Ah, I guess it's a stroke, Clara.

CLARA. It might not be, Mom, you can't tell.

MRS. FISHER. That's how his two brothers went, you know.

CLARA. Amy, you'd better go to the telephone next door and tell Frank Hyland I won't be home. [AMY hurries across towards the hall-door, and CLARA follows her, continuing her instructions.] If he isn't home yet, tell Bertha to tell him to come right down to the Samaritan Hospital as soon as he comes. And tell Johnny Harbison to go to the corner for a taxi. [The front-door closes after AMY, and CLARA steps back to her Mother's side.]

MRS. FISHER. Is that where your Father is, Clara, the Samaritan Hospital?

CLARA. Yes; it's right down there near where he works, at Broad and Ontario.

MRS. FISHER [Starting to cry.] Your poor Father—I wonder what happened to him. [CLARA reflects her Mother's sentiment.]

CLARA [Picking up the plate]. Now, there's no use looking on the dark side of it already, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. No, but me gettin' his supper out there, and him not comin' home to it at all. And maybe never comin' home to it again, Clara, for all we know.

CLARA. He'll be home again, Mom—Pop is a strong man. [She puts the plate on the buffet.]

MRS. FISHER [Suddenly]. I guess he's dead, now, and you're not tellin' me.

CLARA [Coming to her Mother's left]. He isn't dead, Mom; I'd have told you if he was.

MRS. FISHER. What did Joe say?

CLARA. Just what I told you; that he'd had a spell of some kind.

MRS. FISHER. Well, why didn't he tell me! What's he doin' upstairs, anyway?

CLARA. He's changing his clothes; he's got to go right back down there again.

MRS. FISHER. He's cryin' I guess. You know, it'll kill our poor Joe, Clara, if anything happens to your Father.

CLARA. He sez we'd better go right down there, too, Mom; so you'd better go upstairs and fix yourself up a bit. Give me your apron.

MRS. FISHER [*Rising and commencing to remove her apron*]. I don't know whether I'll be able to dress myself now or not; my hands are like lead.

CLARA. You don't need to get all dressed up, Mom—just put on your black-silk waist; that skirt's good enough. [*She goes towards the door at the right with the apron and goes out.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Taking the comb from the back of her head and commencing to comb her hair*]. Well, I'm not goin' down there lookin' like a dago woman.

CLARA [*Coming quickly in again*]. Nobody'll see you in the dark. [*She picks up the plate and towel from the buffet and straightens the runner.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Moving aimlessly about in front of the mantel-piece*]. It won't be dark in the hospital; unless somethin' happens to the lights. [*CLARA goes out again.*] Put that gas out under them potatoes, Clara, I just lit it. And you'd better pick up this room a bit while I'm upstairs, you don't know who might be comin' here if they hear about your Father. [*She stops and looks helplessly about the room.*] Oh, dear, Oh, dear, Oh, dear! I don't know what I'm doin'. [*CLARA comes in again.*] Take all them papers off that table, Clara, and put them in the kitchen.

CLARA [*Crossing to the table and folding and gathering up the various papers*]. You'd better bring your umbrella down with you, Mom, when you go up,—it looked like rain when I came in.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, and I let our Amy take my rubbers the last day she was here, and she *never* brings anything back.

CLARA [*Taking the papers out into the kitchen*]. You won't need rubbers.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, I get all my feet wet, when I don't have rubbers. [*She is facing the hall-door, fastening the old-fashioned brooch at her throat. AUBREY frames himself in the door, with a bandage around his head, and looking a bit battered.*] My God, what happened to you, now!

AUBREY [*Coming forward at the left, removing his hat*]. It's beginning to rain. [*He places his hat and cane on the table, and stands in front of the table removing his gloves.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Following him with her eyes.*] Never mind the rain, the rain didn't do that to you. [*She comes forward at his left. CLARA comes in and stands over near the door at the right, looking at him.*] I guess you ran into somebody, didn't you?

AUBREY [*With a shade of nonchalance*]. Don't get excited, Mother,—just a little misunderstanding on the part of the traffic-officer.

MRS. FISHER. You don't mean to tell me that you ran into a traffic-officer! [*CLARA comes forward at the right.*]

AUBREY. Control, now, Little Mother, I assure there is no occasion for undue solicitation. [*He turns and sees CLARA.*] Good evening, Mrs. Hyland.

CLARA. Hello! What happened to your head?

MRS. FISHER. You look like a bandit.

AUBREY. The veriest trifle, Mrs. Hyland—just a little spray from the wind-shield.

MRS. FISHER. Where's the car you borrowed? Smashed, I guess, ain't it?

AUBREY. The car I borrowed, Mother Fisher, is now in the hands of the bandits of the law. The judicial gentlemen, who have entered into a conspiracy with the regulators of traffic—to collect fines from motorists—by ordering them to go one way—and then swearing that they told them to go another.

MRS. FISHER. Never mind your fancy talk, we've heard too much of that already! I want to know who you killed,—or what

you did run into; for I know you ran into somethin'. And where's the automobile that someone was fool enough to lend you?

AUBREY. The automobile, Little Mother, is perfectly safe—parked and pasturing—in the courtyard of the Twenty-second and Hunting Park Avenue Police Station.

MRS. FISHER. Did you get arrested, too?

AUBREY. I accompanied the officer as far as the station-house, yes; and I told them a few things while I was there, too, about the condition of traffic in this city.

MRS. FISHER. I guess they told you a few things, too, didn't they?

AUBREY. Beg pardon?

MRS. FISHER [*Starting abruptly for the hall-door*]. Never mind; you're welcome.

CLARA. You'd better change your shoes, Mom; you can't go down there with those.

MRS. FISHER [*Pointing toward the cellar-door*]. See if my long black coat's in the cellar-way there. [CLARA goes quickly to the cellar-door, opens it, and looks for the coat.] That fellow's got me so upset I don't know what I'm doin'. [*She goes out the hall-door and to her left, up the stairs. AUBREY moves over to the chair at the right, where MRS. FISHER collapsed, and sits down,—quite ruffled in his dignity. CLARA closes the cellar-door and, with a glance toward the hall-door, comes quickly forward at AUBREY's left.*]

CLARA. What did they do, fine you, Aubrey?

AUBREY. They were all set to fine me; but when I got through with them they didn't have a leg to stand on. So they tried to cover themselves up as gracefully as possible, by trumping up a charge against me of driving an automobile without a license.

CLARA. What did they do, take the automobile away from you?

AUBREY. Nothing of the sort; they simply complied with the usual procedure in a case of this kind—which is to release the defendent on bond, pending the extent of the victim's injuries.

CLARA. Was there somebody injured?

AUBREY. The traffic-cop that ran into me, yes.

CLARA. For God's sake, couldn't you find anybody but the traffic-cop to run into!

AUBREY. I did not run into him, Mrs. Hyland—you don't understand the circumstances of the case.

CLARA. Well, I understand this much about them—that they can give you ten years for a thing like that. And it'd just serve you right if they did, too. Borrowin' people's automobiles, and knowing no more about running them than I do. [*She turns away to her right and moves across above the table towards the hall-door.*]

AUBREY. No time like the present to learn, Mrs. Hyland.

CLARA [*Turning to him sharply*]. Well, you'll very likely have plenty of time, from now on,—if that officer is seriously injured. [*She continues over and down to the window at the left, where she draws the drape aside and looks anxiously down the street for the taxi.*]

AUBREY. He was faking a broken arm around there when I left—But it's a wonder to me the poor straw-ride wasn't signed on the dotted line; for he ran head on right into me.

CLARA [*Crossing back towards him, in front of the Morris-chair*]. Was he in a car, too?

AUBREY. No, he was jay-walking—trying to beat me to the crossing, after giving me the right of way.

CLARA. Where did this thing happen?

AUBREY. Broad and Erie Avenue, I wouldn't kid you.

CLARA. Did they take the cop to the hospital?

AUBREY. Yes, we took him over there in the car.

CLARA. Did they let *you* run it?

AUBREY. Repeat the question, Mrs. Hyland.

CLARA. You heard me,—I don't need to repeat it. And take that silly-looking bandage off your head, before Amy sees you;

and don't frighten the life out of her. [*She steps up to the hall-door and glances out.*] She's got enough to worry her now without looking at you. [*AUBREY rises, and, detaching the handkerchief from around his head, moves across to a point above the center-table.*]

AUBREY. Is my wife here?

CLARA. She's next door, telephoning, yes; and she'll be back in a minute. [*Coming forward a step or two at the left.*] Pop just had a stroke of some kind at his work this afternoon, Joe just told us.

AUBREY. What are you doing, kidding me?

CLARA [*Starting to cry*]. No, of course I'm not kidding you! What would I be kidding you about a thing like that for? [*She crosses down and across in front of the center-table. The front-door closes.*]

AUBREY. Where is he now?

CLARA. They took him to the Samaritan Hospital; we're just going down there. [*AMY appears in the hall-door, and stands looking questioningly at AUBREY.*]

AMY. What's the matter, Aubrey? [*He turns and looks at her.*]

AUBREY [*Extending his arm and hand in a magnificent gesture*]. Well! [*AMY comes forward to her husband.*] The old kid herself!

AMY. What is it, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Taking her in his arms*]. Nothing in the world but this, Baby. [*He kisses her affectionately.*]

CLARA. Did you get Frank on the 'phone, Amy? [*MRS. FISHER can be heard hurrying down the stairs.*]

AMY [*Crossing above AUBREY and speaking directly to CLARA*]. He wasn't home yet; I told the girl to tell him as soon as he came in.

MRS. FISHER [*Coming through the hall-door, and tossing her*

little knit-jacket onto the small stand at the left of the mantel-piece.] CLARA, is that automobile-cab here yet?

CLARA. It'll be here in a minute, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. What do you think of this fellow, Amy,—runnin' wild through the city breakin' policemen's bones! We didn't have enough trouble without that—with your poor Father layin' dead for all we know,—down in the Jewish hospital. [*She starts to cry and steps down to the window at the left to look out for the taxicab.*] It's enough to make a body light-headed.

CLARA. Where's your coat, Mom?

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to her*]. Isn't it there in the cellar-way?

CLARA. No, I just looked.

MRS. FISHER [*Going up to the hall-door*]. It must be upstairs. Joe!

AMY [*At AUBREY's right*]. I thought you were out at the Automobile Show, Aubrey.

MRS. FISHER [*At the foot of the stairs*]. Listen, Joe—

AUBREY. I had a little mix-up at Broad and Erie Avenue.

AMY. You didn't get hurt, did you?

MRS. FISHER and AUBREY, *speaking together*.

MRS. FISHER.—Throw down my long black coat; you'll find it on a hook there in the hall-closet. [*She starts for the buffet.*]

AUBREY.—Nothing but a scratch or two, here on my forehead, from the glass in the wind-shield. Just a little shake-up.

MRS. FISHER [*Stopping and turning sharply at the right of the center-table*]. He nearly killed a traffic-officer!—That's how much of a little shake-up it was. [*She continues to the buffet, where CLARA is standing.*] Get out of my way, Clara, till I get a clean handkerchief out of here. [*She pushes CLARA out of her way and opens the left-hand drawer of the buffet and rummages for a handkerchief. CLARA passes across in front of the center-table to the window at the left.*]

AMY. You *didn't*, Aubrey, did you?

AUBREY. Certainly not, Amy—your Mother's raving. [MRS. FISHER *finds the handkerchief, slams the drawer shut and turns.*]

MRS. FISHER. The man's in the hospital!—I don't know what more you want. [*The big black coat lands at the foot of the stairs with a thud, causing MRS. FISHER to start nervously; then she hurries across at the back towards the hall-door, tucking the folded handkerchief at her waist.*]

AMY. Is he, Aubrey?

AUBREY. Do you think I'd be here, Kid, if he was?

MRS. FISHER [*On the way over*]. You *wouldn't* be here, only that someone was fool enough to bail you out; instead of lettin' you stay in where you couldn't be killin' people. [CLARA *has stepped up to the foot of the stairs and picked the coat up immediately it fell, and now stands holding it for her Mother to put on; but MRS. FISHER disregards her, going straight out to the foot of the stairs and calling shrilly up to JOE.*] Joe, why don't you tell a body when you're goin' to throw a thing down that way, and not be frightenin' the life out of people! [*She comes back into the room again and CLARA assists her. AMY stands above the center-table looking wide-eyed at AUBREY, who sways forward at the left, and, crossing below the center-table to the chair at the right, where he has been previously seated, sits down.*]

CLARA. Aren't you going to put on another waist, Mom?

MRS. FISHER. No, this one is good enough—I'll keep the coat buttoned up. Put that collar inside.

AMY [*In a lowered tone*]. Are you out on bail, Aubrey?

AUBREY. They always bail a man in a case like this, Amy; they've got my car on their hands.

MRS. FISHER [*Buttoning the coat, and moving to the mirror over the mantelpiece*]. Get my hat, will you, Clara?

CLARA [*Starting for the hall-door*]. Where is it, upstairs?

MRS. FISHER. No, it's in the parlor there, inside the top of the Victrola. [CLARA *comes back and goes into the parlor.*]

AMY. Why didn't you bring the car back with you, Aubrey?— That fellow might want it tomorrow.

AUBREY. I'll have it for him all right; I've got to call around there for it Monday morning at ten o'clock. [MRS. FISHER *turns sharply from her primping at the mirror.*]

MRS. FISHER. I guess you've got to go down there to a hearing Monday morning at ten o'clock,—[AMY *turns and looks at her Mother*] and pay your fine! [*Speaking directly to AMY.*] I guess that's the automobile he's got to call for. [CLARA *hurries out of the parlor brushing the dust off an old black hat, with a bunch of cherries on it.*]

CLARA. I'd better go out and get a whisk-broom and dust this, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to her nervously*]. No, never mind, it's good enough, give it to me.

CLARA [*Crossing below her Mother, to the right*]. Your coat needs dusting. [*She takes a whisk-broom from a hook just inside the kitchen-door.*]

AMY. How much did they fine you, Aubrey?

AUBREY. They didn't fine me at all.

MRS. FISHER [*Settling her hat*]. They'll do that Monday.

AUBREY. Time'll tell that, Mother Fisher. [CLARA *hurries back and starts brushing her Mother's coat.*]

MRS. FISHER. And you'll pay it, too, or go to jail; and it'd just be the price of you.

AUBREY. They didn't seem very anxious to do any fining today, after I got through telling it to them.

MRS. FISHER. Am I all right, Clara?

AUBREY. I took a slam at the Pennsylvania Railroad, too, while I was at it.

MRS. FISHER. You're always takin' slams at somethin'; that's what's leavin' you under bail right now. Are you ready, Clara? [*She hurries to the foot of the stairs.*]

CLARA [*Hurrying back to the kitchen with the whisk-broom*]. Yes, I'm ready.

AUBREY. Never mind about that, Mother Fisher.

MRS. FISHER [*Calling up the stairs*]. Are you goin' down there with us, Joe?

JOE [*From upstairs*]. Comin' right down. [MRS. FISHER *comes in to the mantelpiece and picks up her gloves*. CLARA *hurries in from the kitchen again to the center-table and picks up her neck-piece and gloves*.]

AUBREY. Only don't be surprised if you hear of a very quiet little shake-up very soon—in the Department of Public Safety.

MRS. FISHER. Are you warm enough with that coat, Clara?

CLARA. Yes, I'm all right. How about the umbrella?

MRS. FISHER. I think it's out there in the hall-rack; look and see. [CLARA *hurries out into the hallway, and MRS. FISHER stands putting on her gloves*. AMY *crosses to AUBREY's left*.]

AMY [*Very quietly*]. How much bail did they put you under, Aubrey?

AUBREY. One thousand berries, Amy. [MRS. FISHER *looks over at them keenly*.]

AMY. A thousand dollars!

AUBREY. That's regulation—[AMY *turns and gives her Mother a troubled look, and MRS. FISHER moves forward at the left to a point where she can see AUBREY*.] A little chicken-feed for the stool-pigeons.

MRS. FISHER. Did *he* say they put him under a thousand dollars' bail?

AUBREY. That's what I said, Mrs. Fisher, one thousand trifles—I wouldn't kid you.

MRS. FISHER. You wouldn't kid anybody that'd listen to you for five minutes. And who did you get to *go* a thousand dollars bail for you?

AUBREY. Don't be alarmed, Little Mother,—I saw that the affair was kept strictly within the family.

MRS. FISHER. What do you mean?

AUBREY. Your other son-in-law—was kind enough to come forward. [CLARA hurries in from the hallway with the umbrella, and comes forward at the extreme left.]

MRS. FISHER. Clara's husband!

AUBREY. That's the gentleman, Mrs. Fisher,—Mr. Francis X. Hyland.

MRS. FISHER [*Helplessly*]. My God! [*She turns around to her right till she locates CLARA.*] Do you hear that, Clara?

CLARA. What?

MRS. FISHER. He got Frank Hyland to go his bail for a thousand dollars.

CLARA [*Looking bitterly at AUBREY*]. What did you do, write him another letter?

AUBREY. That was not necessary, Mrs. Hyland, not giving you a short answer. Your husband was fortunate enough to see the whole affair from the trolley-car. He was just returning from his business, and happened to be on the trolley-car that ran into me.

MRS. FISHER. How many more things ran into you,—besides traffic-cops and trolley-cars! I suppose a couple of the buildin's ran into you too, didn't they? [JOE hurries in from the hall-door buttoning his overcoat.]

JOE. Are you ready, Mom?

CLARA [*Going up to the hall-door*]. Yes, we're ready. [JOE comes forward at the extreme left, looking questioningly from one to the other. CLARA goes out into the hall.]

AUBREY. You'll find out all about that Monday morning, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving up towards the hall-door*]. Well, see that nothin' else runs into you between now and Monday.

JOE. What's the matter?

MRS. FISHER. We don't want Frank Hyland losin' any thousand-dollar bills on account of you.

JOE. What's happened, Mom?

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to JOE, and pointing at AUBREY with a wide gesture.*] Why, this crazy Jack here's been runnin' into everything in the city but ourselves; and he got himself arrested; and Frank Hyland had to bail him out for a thousand dollars. [*She starts to cry.*]

JOE. What were you doin', Aubrey, joy-ridin'?

MRS. FISHER. No!—he was trolley-ridin',—and traffic-cop-ridin',—and every other kind of ridin',—in an automobile that he borrowed.

CLARA [*Hurrying in from the hallway*]. I think I see that taxi coming, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*Starting towards the hall-door*]. Come on here, Joe. [*JOE crosses up at the left of the center-table to the mirror over the mantelpiece, looking disapprovingly at AUBREY. AUBREY rises and strolls over to a point in front of the center-table.*] How do we get down there, Clara?

CLARA. Right down Erie Ave.

AUBREY. Too bad I left that car down there at the Station House, I could have run you down there. [*They all turn and look at him; and MRS. FISHER, with poison in her right eye, moves forward at the left of the center-table, with a level, ominous slowness.*]

MRS. FISHER. You wouldn't run me down there,—don't fret—not if you had a thousand cars. There's enough of us in the hospital as it is. [*AUBREY simply regards her from a great height.*] And don't you come down there neither;—for you'd only start talkin', and that'd finish Pop quicker than a stroke. [*There's a startling hoot from the taxicab horn outside, which almost throws MRS. FISHER from her balance.*]

CLARA [*Going out*]. Come on, Joe.

JOE [*Following her out*]. Ain't you comin' down to the hospital, Amy?

MRS. FISHER [*Going out*]. No, you'd better stay here, Amy,—there'd better be some one of us here—or that fellow'll be runnin' into somethin' else. You ought to have somethin' heavier on you than that fur, Clara [AUBREY *sits down at the left of the center-table.*]

CLARA [*In the hallway*]. I'm all right, we'll be down there in a few minutes.

MRS. FISHER. Have you got your coat buttoned up good, Joe? [*The front-door closes after them. AMY turns from the hall-door, where she has been standing, seeing them out, and comes forward to the back of the chair at the left of the center-table, where AUBREY is sitting.*]

AMY. Where's your toupé, Aubrey? [*Touching the sticking-plasters on his forehead.*]

AUBREY. In my pocket here.

AMY [*Stroking his hair*]. Is your head hurting you?

AUBREY [*Reaching for her hand and drawing it down over his left shoulder*]. Not a bit, Honey—just a couple of little scratches. [*He kisses her hand. She raises her eyes and looks straight ahead, with a troubled expression.*]

AMY. Aubrey, what do you think they'll do to you down there Monday?

AUBREY. Now, don't you worry about that, Sweetheart; I'll be right there if they try to pull anything. [*She moves over thoughtfully towards the upper right-hand corner of the center-table. Then a new thought occurs to her, and she turns her head and looks at him narrowly.*]

AMY. You hadn't had anything to drink, had you, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Looking at her quickly*]. Who, me?

AMY. I mean I thought somebody might have treated you or something.

AUBREY [*Making a statement*]. I had a glass of Champagne six months ago with a friend of mine in his suite at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and I haven't had a drink of anything since.

AMY. You better take off your overcoat, Aubrey; we'll have to stay here till they get back. [*He gets up and commences to remove the overcoat.*]

AUBREY. Yes, I guess we will.—I wonder how your Father is.

AMY [*Taking the overcoat from him*]. Pretty bad I guess,—or they wouldn't have sent for Joe. [*She takes the coat up to the sofa at the right of the mantelpiece, and AUBREY takes a huge cigar from his vest-pocket and feels for a match.*] I'll get you a match, Aubrey. [*She goes out into the kitchen, and AUBREY moves to a point above the center-table, biting the tip of his cigar.*]

AUBREY. I thought I had some here, but I guess I haven't. Did they send for Joe?

AMY. Yes, they telephoned for him, to the place where he works.

AUBREY. Your Mother said it was a stroke.

AMY [*Entering with some matches*]. I guess that's what it is, too; his two brothers died that way.

AUBREY [*Taking the matches from her*]. I'm sorry to hear that, Amy. But, you mustn't worry, now, Kid.

AMY. It isn't only that I'm worried about, Aubrey;—I'm thinking about you—Monday. [*She takes hold of the lapels of his coat and almost cries.*]

AUBREY [*Putting his arm around her*]. Now, listen to me, Baby—you know I'd tell you, don't you, if there was anything to worry about.

AMY. But, they're getting awfully strict in this city; there's been so many automobile accidents lately.

AUBREY. They're only strict, Honey, when a man's driving under the influence of liquor. [*There's a slight pause, and AMY thinks hard.*]

AMY. What if that traffic-cop is hurt bad, Aubrey?

AUBREY. It'd only be a fine for reckless driving, even if they

could prove it *was* reckless driving; and *I* can prove it was the copper's fault. [*Detaching himself from her.*] So they'll very likely be *apologizing* to me around there Monday morning, instead of fining me. [*He moves across and down to the window at the left,—with ever so slight a touch of swagger.*]

AMY. Oh, I wouldn't care if they only fined you, Aubrey; because I could go back to work until it was paid.

AUBREY [*Looking out the window*]. You'll never go back to work, Kid, while I'm on the boat.

AMY. I wouldn't mind it, Aubrey.

AUBREY. Not while your *my* wife, Amy. [*He half turns to her, with considerable consequence.*] I'd rather leave the Pennsylvania Railroad *flat*; and go out and take one of the jobs that have been offered me where they pay a man what he's worth.

AMY. You don't think they might do anything else to you, do you, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Turning to her*]. Oh, they might try to take away my license.

AMY. You haven't *got* a license, have you?

AUBREY [*Turning back to the window*]. No, I neglected to attend to it this year.

AMY. They can fine you for that, can't they?

AUBREY. Driving an automobile without a license, you mean?

AMY. Yes.

AUBREY. Sure—they can fine you for anything unless you know how to beat them to it. [*He strikes the match on the arm of the Morris-chair at his right.* AMY rests her hands on the center-table, and looks straight out, wretchedly.]

AMY [*Tonelessly*]. What is it they send them to prison for, Aubrey? [*He is just holding the lighted match to the cigar, and, consequently, is unable to answer her immediately. The front door-bell rings. She glances apprehensively in the direction of the hall-door, then meets his eyes.*] I wonder who that is.

AUBREY [*Tossing the burnt match into the window at his left*]. Do you want me to answer it?

AMY. I wish you would, Aubrey; it might be something about Pop. [*He crosses in front of the Morris-chair and up at the left of the center-table to the mirror over the mantelpiece, where he stands settling his tie and vest. AMY turns to the couch and gathers up his coat, then steps forward to the center-table and picks up his hat and the bandage that he took off his head.*]

AUBREY [*Touching the plasters on his forehead*]. Does my head look all right?

AMY [*Glancing at him, as she goes towards the hooks at the head of the cellar-stairs*]. Yes, it's all right, Aubrey.

AUBREY. Wait a minute—[*He steps to her side and takes the carnation from the buttonhole of his overcoat, then steps back to the mirror and fixes it in his sack-coat.*]

AMY. Hurry up, Aubrey. [*The door-bell rings again.*]

AUBREY [*Going out into the hallway*]. All right—all right. [*AMY hangs the overcoat and hat up, then turns, opens the cellar-door, and tosses the bandage down the cellar-stairs. Then she crosses quickly to a point in front of the mantelpiece and listens intently.*]

GILL [*At the front-door*]. Good evenin'.

AUBREY. Good evening, sir.

GILL. Is this where Mr. Fisher lives?

AUBREY. This is Mr. Fisher's residence, yes, sir. What can I do for you?

GILL. Why, I got some things of his here that the boss ast me to leave.

AUBREY. Oh, just step inside for a minute. Getting a little colder I think. [*The front-door closes.*]

GILL. Well, we can look for it any time, now.

AUBREY. Will you just step in this way, please? [*AUBREY enters from the hallway.*] There's a gentleman here, Amy, with

some things belonging to your Father. Just come right in. [AUBREY comes forward a few steps at the left; and GILL enters.]

GILL. Good evenin'.

AMY. Good evening.

AUBREY. This is my wife, Mrs. Piper.

GILL [*Nodding*]. How do you do. [AMY *nods*.]

AUBREY. Mrs. Piper is Mr. Fisher's daughter. The rest of the folks have gone down to the hospital.

GILL. I see. [*Turning to AMY*]. Have you *heard* anything from the hospital yet?

AMY. Not yet, no.

AUBREY. We didn't know anything about it at all, till fifteen minutes ago.

GILL. It's too bad.

AUBREY. Those hospitals won't tell you anything.

AMY. Do you work with my Father?

GILL. No, ma'am, I'm a twister on the second floor. But, one of the machinist's-helpers that works with your Father knows I live out this way, so he ast me to stop by with these things on me way home. [*He crosses towards AMY, with a hat and overcoat, and a more or less discolored lunch-box.*]

AMY [*Taking the things*]. Thanks ever so much.

GILL. There's just the overcoat and hat, and his lunch-box.

AMY. Thanks.

GILL. McMahan sez if he comes across anything else he'll let me know.

AMY [*Crossing to the sofa with the things*]. No, I don't imagine there's anything else.

GILL. If there is, I'll bring it up.

AMY. Well, that's very nice of you; I'm ever so much obliged to you. [*She comes back towards GILL.*]

AUBREY. Who is this McMahan?

GILL. He's one of the machinist's-helpers down there.

AUBREY. I see.

AMY. Were you there when my Father was taken sick?

GILL. No, ma'am, I wasn't. I don't think there was anybody there, to tell you the truth. McMahon sez he was talkin' to him at a quarter of three, and he sez when he came back from the annex at three o'clock, he found Mr. Fisher layin' in front of number five.

AUBREY [*With a suggestion of professionalism*]. Very likely a little touch of Angina Pectoria. [GILL looks at him.]

GILL. The doctor down there sez he thought it was a stroke.

AUBREY. Same thing.

AMY. Won't you sit down, Mr. —a—

GILL. No, thank you, ma'am, I can't stay; I've got to get along out home. [*There's a rapping out at the right. They all look in the direction of the kitchen.*]

AMY. Oh, I guess it's Mrs. Harbison—I'll go. [*She goes out at the right.*]

AUBREY [*Crossing above GILL towards the right*]. Don't stand out there talking, now, Amy, with nothing around you. [*Surveying himself in the buffet-mirror at the right.*] Do you live up this way, Governor?

GILL. No, sir, I live out Richmond way.

AUBREY. I see.

GILL. I take number thirty-two over Allegheny Avenue.

AUBREY [*Turning and moving over towards the center-table*]. Too bad my car's laid up, I could run you out there.

GILL. Oh, that's all right; the trolley takes me right to the door.

AUBREY. I had to turn it in Thursday to have the valves ground.

AMY [*Appearing in the kitchen-door*]. I'm wanted on the telephone, Aubrey; I'll be right in. Will you excuse me for a minute?

GILL. That's all right, ma'am; I'm goin' right along meself.

AUBREY. Very likely some word from the Hospital.

GILL. I hope it ain't any bad news.

AUBREY. Well, you've got to be prepared for most anything Governor, when a man gets up around the old three-score mark.

GILL. That's true, a lot of them push off about that age.

AUBREY. Especially when a man's worked hard all his life.

GILL. Yes, I guess Mr. Fisher's worked pretty hard.

AUBREY. Not an excuse in the world for it, either.—I've said to him a thousand times if I've said to him once, "Well, Pop, when are you going to take the big rest?" "Oh," he'd say, "I'll have lots of time to rest when I'm through." "All right," I'd say, "go ahead; only let me tell you, Pop, you're going to be through ahead of schedule if you don't take it soon."

GILL. Well, I guess it comes pretty hard on a man that's been active all his life to quit all of a sudden.

AUBREY. Well, he wouldn't have to quit exactly.—I mean, he's a handy man; he could putter around the house. There are lots of little things here and there that I'm not any too well satisfied with. [*He glances around the room.*]

GILL. Is Mr. Fisher's wife livin'?

AUBREY. Yes, she's here with us too.

GILL. Well, that makes it nice.

AUBREY. Well, it's a pretty big house here; so when I married last June, I said, "Come ahead, the more the merrier." [*He laughs a little.*]

GILL. 'Tis a pretty big house this.

AUBREY. Yes, they don't make them like this anymore, Governor. Put up by the McNeil people out here in Jenkintown.

GILL. Oh, yes.

AUBREY. They just put up the twenty of them—kind of sample houses—ten on that side and ten on this. Of course,

these on this side have the southern exposure,—so a man's got to do quite a bit of wire-pulling to get hold of one of these.

GILL. You've got to do some wire-pullin' to get hold of *any* kind of a house these days.

AUBREY. Well, I have a friend here in town that's very close to the city architect, and he was able to fix it for me.

GILL [*Glancing toward the window, at the left*]. It's a nice street.

AUBREY. Nice in summer.

GILL. I was surprised when I saw it, because when I ast a taxicab-driver down here where it was, he said he never heard of it.

AUBREY [*Looking at him keenly*]. Never heard of Cresson Street?

GILL. He said not.

AUBREY [*With pitying amusement*]. He must be an awful straw-ride.

GILL. I had to ast a police officer.

AUBREY. Well, I'll tell you, Governor,—I don't suppose they have many *calls* for taxicabs out this way. You see, most everybody in through here has his own *car*.

GILL. I see.

AUBREY. Some of them have a half dozen, for that matter. [*He laughs, a bit consequentially.*]

GILL [*Starting for the parlor-doors*]. There certainly is plenty of them knockin' around.

AUBREY. All over the ice. [*Aubrey indicates the hall-door.*] This way, Governor.

GILL [*Turning towards the hall-door*]. Oh, excuse me.

AUBREY [*Moving towards the hall-door*]. Those doors go into the parlor.

GILL. I see. [*He turns at the hall-door*]. A fellow was tellin' me over here in the cigar store that there was quite a smash-

up about a half hour ago down here at Broad and Erie Avenue.

AUBREY. That so?

GILL. He sez there was some *nut* down there runnin' into everything in sight. He sez he even ran into the traffic-cop; and broke his arm. Can you imagine what they'll *do* to that guy, knockin' the traffic-cop down!

AUBREY. What was the matter with him, was he stewed?

GILL. *No*,—the fellow in the cigar store sez he was just a *nut*. He sez they didn't know where he got hold of this car; he sez it didn't belong to him. I guess he picked it up somewhere. They took it away from him and pinched him. [*Starting to go out.*] So I guess he won't be runnin' into anything else for a while.

AUBREY [*Following him out*]. Traffic's in pretty bad shape in this town right now.

GILL. Certainly is. Why, a man's not safe walkin' along the sidewalk, these days. I hope your wife'll hear some good news.

AUBREY. Well, while there's life there's hope, you know.

GILL. That's right. No use lookin' on the dark side of things. [*AMY enters from the right, with a wide-eyed, wan expression, and comes slowly down to the center-table.*]

AUBREY. Where do you get your car, Governor?

GILL. Why, I can get one right at the corner here, and transfer.

AUBREY. Oh, that's right, so you can. Well, we're ever so much obliged to you.

GILL. Don't mention it.

AUBREY. Good-night, sir.

GILL. Good-night. [*The door closes.*]

AUBREY [*Coming in from the hall-door*]. When did you come in, Amy? [*He stops to look at himself in the mantelpiece-mirror.*]

AMY [*Without turning*]. I came in the side-door; I thought that man'd be still here.

AUBREY [*Coming down to her*]. Well, Kid, what's the good word?

AMY [*Breaking down*]. Aubrey, Pop is dead. [*She buries her face in the lapel of his coat. He takes her in his arms, looks straight ahead, and there is a long pause—during which AMY cries hard.*]

AUBREY. Don't let it get you, Honey—you have nothing to regret; and nothing to fear. The Kid from West Philly'll never go back on you,—you know that, don't you, Baby? [*She continues to cry.*] You know that, don't you, Amy? [*She doesn't answer him.*] Amy.

AMY. What?

AUBREY. You know I'm with you, don't you?

AMY. Yes. [*He kisses her hair affectionately.*]

AUBREY. Don't cry, Honey; the old man's better off than we are. He knows all about it now. [*He kisses her again; then detaches himself and moves over and down at the left of the center-table.*]

AMY. What do you think we ought to do, Aubrey?

AUBREY. There's nothing at all that you can do that I can see, Sweetheart; except to sit tight till the folks get back. They'll be down there themselves in a few minutes, and they'll know all about it.

AMY. They said that Pop died at a quarter of six.

AUBREY. Was that the Hospital on the telephone?

AMY. Yes.

AUBREY [*Moving up to a point above the center-table again*]. Something we ought to have in here, Amy; a telephone—not be letting the whole neighborhood in on our business. [*AMY leans on the back of the chair at the right and cries softly.*]

Now, pull yourself together, Sweetheart. [*He crosses to her and puts his arm around her shoulders.*]

AMY. This is where Pop always used to sit in the evening.—It'll seem funny not to see him here anymore. [*She breaks down again.*]

AUBREY [*After a slight pause*]. The old gent had to go sometime. [*He passes back of her, comes forward at the right and stands, looking at the tip of his cigar.*] Your Mother'll have you and me to comfort her now. [*He strolls across below the center-table and stops, thinking profoundly. AMY sinks down on the chair dejectedly.*]

AMY. I don't know how Mom'll keep this house going now, just on Joe's pay.

AUBREY. Why don't you say something to your Mother about letting us come in here? She'll need a man in the house. And my salary 'ud cover the rent.

AMY. Mom doesn't have to pay rent, Aubrey,—she owns this house. Pop left it to her. He made his will out the week after we were married. [*AUBREY looks at her keenly.*] Clara got him to do it.

AUBREY. Who's the executor, do you know?

AMY. Clara is. [*AUBREY nods comprehendingly.*]

AUBREY [*Looking away off*]. Too bad your Father didn't make me the executor of that will;—I could have saved him a lot of money. [*He replaces the cigar in his mouth.*]

AMY. I suppose he thought on account of Clara being the oldest.

AUBREY. I wonder why your Father never liked me.

AMY. Pop never said he didn't like you, Aubrey.

AUBREY. I always tried to be clubby with him. I used to slap him on the back whenever I spoke to him.

AMY. Pop was always very quiet.

AUBREY. And the Kid from West Philly had too much to say.

Well,—forgive and forget.—It's all over now.—And the old man can be as quiet as he likes. [AMY *cries again, and there is a pause.* AUBREY *stands smoking.*]

AMY [*Pulling herself together and getting up*]. You haven't had anything to eat tonight yet, have you, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Coming out of his abstraction, and sauntering up at the left of the center-table.*] Don't worry about me, Sweetheart.

AMY [*Going to the buffet-drawer at the right for an apron*]. I'll get you something.

AUBREY. It'll be all the same at the finish,—whether I've had my dinner or not. [*He rests his fist on the table, throws his head back, and looks to the stars.*] “*Sic transit gloria mundi.*” And we never get used to it. [*He moves across to the upper right-hand corner of the center-table.*] The paths of glory lead but to the grave. [*He stops again, leans on the table and looks out and away off.*] And yet we go on,—building up big fortunes—only to leave them to the generations yet unborn. Well, [*He moves forward to the chair at the right*—so it goes. [*He sits down, throws one leg across his knee, and shakes his head up and down slowly.*] And so it will *always* go, I suppose. “*Sic transit gloria mundi.*”

AMY [*Standing at his right*]. What does that mean, Aubrey, “*Sic transit gloria mundi*”?

AUBREY [*Casually*]. It's an old saying from the French—meaning, “we're here to-day, and gone tomorrow.”

AMY [*Looking out, wretchedly*]. I'm worried about tomorrow, Aubrey. [*He looks at her.*]

AUBREY. What are you worried about, Sweetheart?

AMY. I mean Monday.

AUBREY [*Extending his hand towards her*]. Now,—“sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,”—you know that, don't you, Baby? [*She takes his hand and moves over to the back of his chair.*]

AMY. But, you didn't have a license, Aubrey. And if that traffic-officer should be seriously injured——

AUBREY. Don't you worry about that, Sweetheart;—we're here today; and if he's seriously injured,—we'll know all about it Monday. [*The curtain commences to descend slowly.*] “*Sic transit gloria mundi.*”

THE CURTAIN IS DOWN.

THIRD ACT

THE SHOW-OFF

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE: *Same as preceding Act—the following Monday, about four o'clock in the afternoon.* MRS. FISHER is seated at the right of the center-table, in black, watching MR. ROGERS, the insurance agent, opposite her, writing on various papers. CLARA, also in mourning, is standing back of her Mother's chair, watching MR. ROGERS.

ROGERS [*Handing MRS. FISHER an insurance receipt*]. Now, will you just sign that, Mrs. Fisher. Right on that line there. [*He hands her his fountain-pen.*]

MRS. FISHER [*After a sincere attempt to write with the fountain-pen*]. It won't write.

CLARA. Press on it a bit, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. I am pressin' on it.

ROGERS. Just let me have it a second, Mrs. Fisher. [*She hands him the pen.*]

MRS. FISHER. I never saw one of them fountain-pens yet that'd write.

ROGERS [*Holding the pen out and shaking it, in an attempt to force the ink forward.*] They cut up a little once in a while. [*MRS. FISHER looks keenly to see if her carpet is being stained.*]

MRS. FISHER. I gave one to my son the Christmas before last, and it's been in that drawer there from that day to this.

ROGERS [*Handing her the pen again*]. There we are. I think you'll find that all right.

MRS. FISHER. Right here?

ROGERS. That's right. [*He commences to collect his papers.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Writing*]. It's writin' now all right.

ROGERS. It's usually pretty satisfactory. [*She hands him the*

receipt, and he hands her another.] And that one also, Mrs. Fisher, if you please.

MRS. FISHER. In the same place?

ROGERS. Yes; right on the dotted line. It's just a duplicate. [*She looks at him sharply, then signs it and hands it back to him; and he puts it into his wallet. MRS. FISHER looks distrustfully at the point of the fountain-pen.*]

MRS. FISHER. Here's the pen.

ROGERS. Thank you. [*He signs a check and looks at it.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Half-turning towards the cellar-door*]. See if that cellar-door is closed, Clara, I feel a draught from somewhere. [*CLARA goes and sees that the door is closed.*]

ROGERS [*Handing a check*]. There you are, Mrs. Fisher, one thousand dollars.

MRS. FISHER. Thank you. [*CLARA comes forward again.*]

ROGERS [*Collecting his things*]. That's money we like to pay, Mrs. Fisher, and money we don't like to pay.

MRS. FISHER. No, things are never very pleasant when this kind of money is bein' paid.

ROGERS [*Rising, and putting his wallet into his inside-pocket.*] Well, at least, it doesn't make things any less pleasant, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER [*Rising*]. No, I'm sure I don't know what a lot of folks'ud do without it.

ROGERS. Pretty hard to make a good many of them see it that way, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving around to a point above the table*]. Yes, I guess we don't think much about trouble when we're not havin' it.

ROGERS. Lot of people think they're never going to have trouble; [*MRS. FISHER shakes her head knowingly*] and never going to need a dollar.

MRS. FISHER. They're very foolish.

ROGERS. Very foolish indeed.

MRS. FISHER. Everybody'll have trouble if they live long enough.

ROGERS. Yes, indeed.

MRS. FISHER. Well now, what do I do with this check, Mr. Rogers?

ROGERS. Why, you can deposit it if you like, Mrs. Fisher, or have it cashed—just whatever you like.

CLARA. Frank'll get it cashed for you, Mom, downtown.

MRS. FISHER. I'm not used to thousand-dollar checks, you know, Mr. Rogers.

ROGERS. I'm not very used to them myself, Mrs. Fisher, except to pay them out to somebody else. [*He laughs a little.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, will you take this, then, Clara, and give it to Frank Hyland?

CLARA [*Advancing*]. Yes; I'll give it to him tonight, Mom. [*Rogers moves to the window at the left and takes a paper from his pocket.*]

MRS. FISHER. Don't go layin' it down somewhere, now, and forgettin' where you left it,—the way you're always doin' with your gloves.

CLARA [*Crossing to the buffet where her purse is lying*]. I'll put it in my purse here. [*MRS. FISHER comes forward at the right of the Morris-chair*].

ROGERS [*Turning and coming back a little from the window*]. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Fisher—would you give this to your son-in-law, Mr. Piper? [*He hands her the paper.*]

MRS. FISHER. What is it?

ROGERS. Why, it's a little explanation of some of the features of a very attractive *accident* policy that our company has brought out recently;—and I was talking to Mr. Piper about it the day I called for Mr. Fisher's policy. He seemed to be very much interested. In fact, I find that people are usually a

little more susceptible to the advantages of a good insurance policy, when they actually see it being paid to somebody else. Now, that particular policy there—is a kind of combination of accident and life-insurance policy,—as well as disability and dividend features. In fact, we contend that there is no investment on the market today [CLARA *sits down in the arm-chair at the right window*] that offers the security or return that that particular policy described there does. The thing is really almost benevolent.

MRS. FISHER. How much is it for?

ROGERS. Why, we *have* them as low as ten thousand dollars; but the policy that Mr. *Piper* was most interested in, was one of our fifty-thousand dollar policies. [CLARA *laughs faintly, and her Mother looks over at her.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Turning back to ROGERS*]. It's no wonder she's laughin', Mr. Rogers; for if you knew Mr. *Piper* as well as she knows him, you'd laugh too. He has just about as much notion of takin' out a fifty-thousand-dollar insurance policy as I have. And just about as much chance of payin' for it.

ROGERS. Why, he seemed very much interested, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER. He was showin' off, Mr. Rogers, what he's always doin'. Why, that fellow don't make enough salary in six months—to pay one year's premium on a policy like this. So, if I was you, I'd just put this paper right back in my pocket, for you're only wastin' it to be givin' it to him.

ROGERS [*Taking the paper*]. Seems rather funny that he'd talk about it at all,—I mean, if he had no idea of taking it.

MRS. FISHER. He never has any idea when *he* talks, Mr. Rogers—that's the reason he talks so much; it's no effort. That's the reason he's gettin' thirty-two dollars a week, down here in the Pennsylvania Freight Office. And it's a wonder to me they give him *that* much, after listenin' to him for five minutes.

ROGERS. It's particularly funny, because I spoke to Mr. *Piper*

first about one of our ten-thousand-dollar policies; but he didn't seem to be interested in anything but the *fifty-thousand-dollar* life and *accident* policy.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I can understand him being interested in the accident part of it, after last Monday. I suppose you heard about him runnin' into everything here last Monday evening, didn't you? Down here at Broad and Erie Avenue.

ROGERS. Oh, was that Mr. Piper?

MRS. FISHER. That was him. He ran into a traffic-cop, and broke his arm.

ROGERS. Yes, I saw that in the paper; but the name was spelled Pepper in my paper.

MRS. FISHER. Well, it was spelled Piper in our paper.

ROGERS. Well, what did they do about that, Mrs. Fisher?

MRS. FISHER. Why, he's down there today, at the Magistrate's, gettin' his hearin'. God knows what they'll do with him; for he didn't own the car he was drivin', and didn't have a license to drive it.

ROGERS. Well, that's very unfortunate.

MRS. FISHER. But, he'll very likely tire the magistrate out so with his talk, that the man'll discharge him just to get rid of him.

ROGERS [*Laughing*]. I'm afraid Mr. Piper won't want to see me today when he comes back.

MRS. FISHER. He may not *be* back, for six months.

ROGERS [*Starting for the hall-door*]. Oh, well, let's hope it won't be anything like that. Good afternoon, Mrs. Hyland.

CLARA [*Rising*]. Good afternoon, Mr. Rogers. [*He goes out into hallway.*]

ROGERS. Good afternoon, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER. Good afternoon, Mr. Rogers. [*Calling after him from the hall-door.*] Will you close that vestibule-door tight after you, Mr. Rogers——

ROGERS. Yes, I will, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER. This hallway gets awful cold when that vestibule-door isn't shut tight. [*A door closes in the hallway, then another door. And then MRS. FISHER turns, removing her glasses, and moves towards the mantelpiece.*] I'm glad you were here; I don't understand them insurance papers. [*She puts her glasses on the mantelpiece.*]

CLARA [*Moving to the chair at the right of the center-table*]. What do you think you'll do with that money, Mom?

MRS. FISHER. Why, I think I'll just put it into a bank somewhere; everything is paid. And then I'll have something in my old days. [*She comes forward to the chair at the left of the center-table.*]

CLARA. Do you want me to put the check right into the bank?

MRS. FISHER. No,—I want to see the money first. [*She sits down.*] But, can you imagine that clown, Clara, takin' up that man's time talkin' about a fifty-thousand dollar policy; and him in debt to his eyes.

CLARA [*Sitting down*]. What does it matter, Mom; you can never change a man like Piper.

MRS. FISHER. No, but I hate to see him makin' such a fool of Amy; and of all of us,—with his name in all the papers, and the whole city laughin' at him.

CLARA. He doesn't mind that, he likes it.

MRS. FISHER. But, Amy's married to him, Clara,—that's the trouble.

CLARA. Amy doesn't mind it either, Mom, as long as its Aubrey.

MRS. FISHER. Well, she ought to mind it, if she's got any pride.

CLARA [*Looking straight ahead, wistfully*]. She's in love with him, Mom—she doesn't see him through the same eyes that other people do.

MRS. FISHER. You're always talkin' about love; you give me a pain.

CLARA. Well, don't you think she is?

MRS. FISHER. How do *I* know whether she is or not? I don't know anything about when people are in love; except that they act silly—most everybody that I ever knew that was. I'm sure *she* acted silly enough when she took *him*.

CLARA. She might have taken worse, Mom. [MRS. FISHER looks at her; and CLARA meets the look.] He does his best. He works every day, and he gives her his money; and nobody ever heard of him looking at another woman.

MRS. FISHER. But, he's such a rattle-brain, Clara.

CLARA. Oh, there are lots of things that are harder to put up with in a man than that, Mom. I know he's terribly silly, and has too much to say, and all that, but,—I don't know, I feel kind of sorry for him sometimes. He'd so love to be important; and, of course, he never will be.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I swear I don't know how Amy stands the everlastin' talk of him. He's been here now only a week, and I'm tellin' you, Clara, I'm nearly light-headed. I'll be glad when they go.

CLARA. I'd rather have a man that talked too much than one of those silent ones. Honestly, Mom, I think sometimes if Frank Hyland doesn't *say* something I'll go out of my mind.

MRS. FISHER. What do you want him to say?

CLARA. Anything; just so I'd know he had a voice.

MRS. FISHER. He's too sensible a man, Clara, to be talkin' when he has nothin' to say.

CLARA. I don't think it's so sensible, Mom, never to have anything to say.

MRS. FISHER. Well, lot's of men are that way in the house.

CLARA. But there are usually children there,—it isn't so bad.

MRS. FISHER. Well, if Amy ever has any children, and they

have as much to say as their Father, I don't know what'll become of her.

CLARA. She'll get along some way; people always do.

MRS. FISHER. Leanin' on somebody else,—*that's* how they get along.

CLARA. There are always the Leaners and the Bearers, Mom. But, if she's in love with the man she's married to,—and he's in love with her,—and there are children——

MRS. FISHER. I never saw a married woman so full of love.

CLARA. I suppose that's because I never had any of it, Mom. [*Her Mother looks over at her.*]

MRS. FISHER. Don't your man love you? [*CLARA looks straight out, shaking her head slowly.*]

CLARA. He loved someone else before he met me.

MRS. FISHER. How do you know?

CLARA. The way he talks sometimes.

MRS. FISHER. Why didn't he marry her?

CLARA. I think he lost her. I remember he said to me one time—"Always be kind, Clara, to anybody that loves you; for," he said, "a person always loses what he doesn't appreciate. And," he said, "it's a *terrible* thing to lose love." He said, "You never realize what it was worth until you've lost it." I think that's the reason he gives Piper a hand once in a while,—because he sees Amy's in love with him, and he wants to make it easy for her; because I have an idea he made it pretty hard for the woman that loved him. [*MRS. FISHER leans back and rocks slowly.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, a body can't have everything in this world, Clara. [*There is a pause: and CLARA touches her handkerchief to her eyes. Then the front-door closes softly, and MRS. FISHER gets up.*] Maybe this is them now. [*She moves up to the hall-door. AMY comes in, looking wearied. She is in mourning.*] What happened, Amy? [*AMY wanders down to the*

chair at left of table and sits down, and her Mother follows her down at the left.] Where's Aubrey Piper?

AMY. He's coming.

CLARA. Is Frank with him?

AMY. Yes.

MRS. FISHER. Where are they?

AMY. Aubrey stopped at the corner to get some cigars.

CLARA. What happened down there?

AMY. Oh, a lot of talk.

MRS. FISHER [*Leaning towards her, solicitously*]. Are you sick?

AMY. No.

MRS. FISHER. Well, you look sick.

AMY. I have a headache; we had to wait there so long.

CLARA. Why don't you take off your hat? [*AMY starts to remove her hat.*]

MRS. FISHER. Will I make you a cup of tea?

AMY. No, don't bother, Mom; I can get it myself.

MRS. FISHER [*Going towards the right door*]. It won't take a minute. [*AMY takes her handkerchief from her bag. CLARA glances toward the right door.*]

CLARA [*In a subdued tone*]. What did they do to Aubrey?

AMY [*Confidentially*]. Fined him—a thousand dollars. Don't let Mom know. Recklessness, and driving without a license.

CLARA. Did Frank pay it?

AMY. Yes; I told him I'd be responsible for it.

CLARA. How can *you* ever pay him a thousand dollars, Amy?

AMY. I can go back to work for a while. I can always go back to the office. [*CLARA moves.*] Well, it was either that or six months in jail. And Frank said we couldn't have that.

CLARA. Was there anybody there that we know?

AMY. I didn't see anybody.

CLARA. Was the traffic-cop there?

AMY. Yes, there were fourteen witnesses. The traffic-cop's arm was broken. The fellow that owned the car was there, too.

CLARA. When do you think you'll go back to work?

AMY [*After a troubled pause*]. As soon as I get settled. There's no use in my going back now; I'd only have to be leaving again pretty soon. [CLARA looks at her.]

CLARA. Does Mom know?

AMY. No, I haven't told her. [*There is a pause. CLARA gets up; and, with a glance toward the kitchen-door, moves around and crosses towards the left, above the center-table. She stops back of AMY'S chair and looks at her for a second compassionately; then she steps forward and lays her hand on her shoulder.*]

CLARA. Don't worry about it, Amy. [*She moves towards the window at the left.*] I wish to God it was me. [*There is a murmur of voices at the front-door; then AUBREY'S laugh rings through the house. AMY rises quickly, picks up her hat from the table, and signifies to CLARA, with a gesture, that she will go into the parlor. CLARA moves across in front of the center-table.*]

AUBREY [*Entering, all dressed up, and with a little flourish of his cane to CLARA*]. Hello, Clara!

CLARA. Hello.

AUBREY [*Hanging up his hat and cane on the hooks at the head of the cellar-stairs*]. Where's Amy?

CLARA. She's just gone in the parlor there. [FRANK HYLAND appears in the hall-door and comes forward to the chair at the left of the table.]

HYLAND. Hello! [AUBREY crosses to the parlor, removing his gloves.]

AUBREY. You in there, Amy?

AMY. Yes. [*He goes into the parlor; and CLARA moves across above the center-table to HYLAND'S left.*]

CLARA. How is it you didn't go back to the office, Frank?

[AUBREY hurries out of the parlor again and across to the hooks, removing his overcoat. MRS. FISHER appears in the kitchen-door, and stands, looking at him.]

HYLAND. It was so late when we got through down there I didn't think it was worth while.

AUBREY. Hello, Mother.

MRS. FISHER. I see you're back again. [*He hangs up his overcoat.*]

AUBREY. Right on the job, Mother,—doing business at the old stand. [*He takes the carnation from the overcoat and fastens it in the sack-coat. MRS. FISHER comes forward at the right.*]

HYLAND. Hello, Mother!

MRS. FISHER. Hello, Frank.

HYLAND. You're lookin' good, Mother.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I'm not feelin' good, Frank, I can tell you that.

HYLAND. What's the trouble?

MRS. FISHER. Why, I'm troubled to think of all the bother you've been put to in this business.

HYLAND. Don't worry about that, Mother—we've got to have a little bother once in a while.

MRS. FISHER. What did they do down there today, Frank?

HYLAND. Why,—they——

AUBREY [*Coming forward, adjusting the carnation*]. I'll tell you what they *tried* to do.

MRS. FISHER. Oh, shut up, you! Nobody wants to hear what you've got to say about it at all. [*CLARA crosses above the Morris-chair and looks out the window at the left.*]

AUBREY. Well, I *told* them down there what I had to say about it, whether they wanted to hear it or not. [*He goes up to the mirror at the back.*]

MRS. FISHER. I guess they let you go just to get rid of you. [*He turns to his left and looks at her; then starts for the parlor-doors.*]

CLARA. Why don't you take your coat off, Frank? [AUBREY goes into the parlor, looking back over his shoulder at his Mother-in-law, who has not taken her eyes off him.]

HYLAND [Looking at his watch]. I've got to meet that fellow at North Philadelphia Station at four o'clock.

MRS. FISHER [Coming a step or two nearer to the table]. What did they say to that fellow down there today, Frank?

HYLAND. Why, nothing very much, Mother—just a little reprimand, for driving without a license.

MRS. FISHER. Didn't they fine him at all, for breakin' that man's arm?

HYLAND. A little bit, not very much.—You see, that was more or less in the nature of an accident.

MRS. FISHER. How much was it?

HYLAND. Now, Mrs. Fisher, as Aubrey says, "It's all washed up, and signed on the dotted line." [He laughs.]

MRS. FISHER. How much was it, Clara, do you know?

CLARA. He hasn't told me, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I'll bet you paid it, Frank, whatever it was; for I know he didn't have it. [She sits at the right of the table.]

HYLAND [Rising]. Well, you know, it's getting near Christmas, Mother—got to give some kind of a little present here and there.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I don't think it's right that you should have to be goin' around payin' for that fellow's mistakes.

HYLAND [Standing up a bit toward the hall-door, putting on his gloves]. That's about all any of us is doin' in this world, Mother—payin' for somebody's mistakes—and somebody payin' for ours, I suppose.

MRS. FISHER. Well, it don't seem right to me.

HYLAND. Well, I'll tell you, Mother—when you've made a couple of mistakes that *can't* be paid for, why, then you try to

forget about them by payin' for the kind that can. [*He makes a little pallid sound of amusement. And there is a pause. MRS. FISHER rocks back and forth.*]

CLARA. Will you be home for dinner tonight, Frank?

HYLAND [*coming suddenly out of an abstraction*]. What'd you say?

CLARA. I say, will you be home for dinner tonight?

HYLAND [*Picking up his hat from the table*]. I don't think so; I'll very likely have to go to dinner with *him*. [*He goes towards the hall-door.*] Good-bye, Mother.

MRS. FISHER. Good-bye, Frank.

HYLAND [*Going out into the hallway*]. Good-bye, dear. [*CLARA wanders up to the hall-door and looks out after him.*]

CLARA. Good-bye. [*The vestibule-door is heard to close. And there is a significant pause; during which CLARA stands looking wistfully out into the hallway.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Rising, and moving to a point above the table*]. Listen, Clara. [*CLARA comes towards her.*]

CLARA. What?

MRS. FISHER. Didn't he tell you how much they fined Aubrey?

CLARA. No, he didn't, Mom, really.

MRS. FISHER. Didn't *she* tell you, while I was out puttin' the tea on?

CLARA [*Moving forward to the chair at the left of the table*]. Well now, what does it matter, Mom? You won't have to pay it. [*She sits down.*]

MRS. FISHER. Well, I'll find out; it'll very likely be in the evening paper.

CLARA. Well, I wouldn't say anything to Amy about it, even if it is; she has enough to bother her now.

MRS. FISHER. Well, she brought it on herself if she has:—nobody could tell her anything.

CLARA. Well, there's nothing can be done by fighting with her, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*With conviction*]. There's nothing can be done by *anything*, Clara,—when once the *main* thing is done. And that's the marriage. That's where all the trouble starts—gettin' married.

CLARA. If there were no marriages, Mom, there'd be no world.

MRS. FISHER [*Moving around to the chair at the right of the table again*]. Oh, everybody sez that!—if there were no marriages there'd be no world.

CLARA. Well, would there?

MRS. FISHER. Well, what if there wouldn't? [*She sits down.*] Do you think it'd be any worse than it is now? I think there'll be no world pretty soon, anyway, the way things are goin'. A lot of whiffets gettin' married, and not two cents to their names, and then throwin' themselves on their people to keep them. They're so full of love before they're married. You're about the only one I've *heard* talkin' about love *after* they were married. It's a wonder to me you have a roof over you; for they never have, with that kind of talk. Like the two in the parlor there—that has to *kiss* eachother, every time they meet on the floor. [*She bristles for a second or two; and then there is a silence.*]

CLARA [*Quietly*]. Amy's going to have a child, Mom. [*Her Mother looks at her.*]

MRS. FISHER. How do you know?

CLARA. She told me so.

MRS. FISHER [*Softening a bit*]. Why didn't she tell me?

CLARA. I suppose she thought it'd start a fight.

MRS. FISHER [*Indignant again*]. I don't know why it'd start a fight; I never fight with anybody; except him: and I wouldn't fight with *him* only for his impudence.

CLARA. Has Amy said anything to you about coming in here to live?

MRS. FISHER. She said something to me the night your Father was laid out, but I wasn't payin' much attention to her.

CLARA. I think you ought to let her come in here, Mom. [*Her Mother looks at her.*] She'd be company for you, now that Pop is gone. And you don't know what day Joe might take a notion to get married.

MRS. FISHER. What's changed *your* ideas so much about lettin' her come in here? You were very much against it when she was married.

CLARA. I'd be against it now, if things around here were the way they were then. You didn't even own this house, Mom, when Amy was married: it was Pop's; and I knew if anything ever happened to him, and there was no will,—you might not find it so easy to order anybody out of it.

MRS. FISHER. It isn't that I'd mind lettin' Amy come in here, Clara,—but I wouldn't like to please him; for I know the first thing *I'd* know, he'd very likely be tellin' somebody that he'd let *me* come in. [*CLARA smiles faintly.*] Oh, I wouldn't put it past him; he's told bigger lies than that. And if I ever found out that he said *that*,—he'd go out of here inside of five minutes, bag and baggage. [*The front door-bell rings.*] See who that is, Clara. [*They rise; and CLARA goes out—into the hallway, and MRS. FISHER crosses below the table to the parlor-doors.*] Are you in there, Amy? [*She opens the door.*]

AMY. Yes; what is it, Mom?

MRS. FISHER. This kettle's boilin' out here, if you want a cup of tea.

AMY. All right, Mom, I'll be right out.

MRS. FISHER [*Crossing to the kitchen-door*]. I'm goin' to make it right away, so you'd better come out if you want it hot. [*She goes out at the right.*]

AMY [*Coming out of parlor*]. Do you want a cup of tea, Aubrey? [*She crosses to the mirror over the mantelpiece and touches her hair.*]

AUBREY [*Coming out of the parlor*]. No, thanks, Honey, I

don't care for any just now. [*He strolls to the hall-door, glances out, then moves to AMY's side and puts his hands on her shoulders and kisses her affectionately. Then he pats her on the shoulder. She moves towards the kitchen-door.*]

AUBREY [*Patting her hand*]. Everything'll be all right, Kid. You know me. [*She goes out into the kitchen, and he settles himself at the mirror over the buffet at the right.*]

CLARA [*In the hallway*]. Yes, I think it is myself. [*Appearing in the hall-door.*] Just come right in, I'll call my Mother. Is she out in the kitchen, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Turning*]. Yes, she's getting some tea. [*GILL appears in the hall-door.*]

GILL. Well, you needn't bother, Ma'am, if she's busy. I just wanted to leave this watch.

AUBREY. How do you do.

GILL. How do you do. [*CLARA stops and looks back at the watch.*]

AUBREY. And how is the young man?

GILL. I can't complain.

CLARA. Is that my Father's watch?

GILL. Yes, Ma'am. Are you Mr. Fisher's daughter?

CLARA. Yes. Close that door, Aubrey, will you?—I don't want Mom to see it. [*To GILL.*] I'd rather my Mother wouldn't see it. [*She takes the watch, and AUBREY closes the kitchen-door.*]

GILL. That's right.

CLARA. I believe she gave him this watch when they were married. [*AUBREY comes forward again, at the right.*]

GILL. Yes, it'd make her feel bad.

CLARA. Thanks ever so much.

GILL. McMahan didn't notice it when he was gettin' the rest of Mr. Fisher's things together.

CLARA. I see.

GILL. He said it was hangin' under the time-chart, back of number five.

AUBREY. This is the gentleman that brought Pop's lunch-box home.

CLARA. Oh, is that so?

GILL. I stopped by the day Mr. Fisher died.

CLARA. Did you work with my father?

GILL. No, Ma'am; I'm a twister; but I live out this way.

AUBREY. How is it you're not working today, Governor?

GILL. Mondays and Tuesdays is my earlies as a rule.

AUBREY. I see.

GILL. But the hunkies don't always get the stuff up to us. You got to keep right after them. Well, I guess I'll be gettin' along. [*He starts for the parlor-doors, then remembers that that is not the way out, and turns to his left towards the hall-door.*]

CLARA. I'm ever so much obliged to you, for bringing this watch up.

GILL [*Turning to her, at the hall-door*]. Oh, that's all right. I'm only sorry for the reason I have to do it.

CLARA. Yes, it was very sad.

GILL. Mr. Fisher was a hard-workin' man.

CLARA. I suppose he worked *too* hard, for his age.

GILL. Yes, I guess he did.

CLARA. You couldn't stop him, though.

GILL. No, that's what your brother-in-law here was sayin' the day I was here. He was tellin' me about all the times *he* tried to get him to quit, and take a rest. [*AUBREY turns to the buffet-mirror.*] But, I guess when a man's worked as hard all his life as Mr. Fisher did, it ain't so easy for him to quit.

CLARA. No, I guess not.

GILL [*Stepping a little forward again*]. I didn't know that was you, Mr. Piper, that was in that automobile smash-up that I was tellin' you about the day I was here.

AUBREY [*Turning*]. That so?

GILL. I didn't know it till I saw your picture in the paper the next day.

AUBREY. What paper did you see it in?

GILL. I saw it in the Record.

AUBREY. Wasn't a very good picture of me, was it?

GILL. I knew it was you, though, the minute I saw it.

AUBREY. A friend of mine loaned me his car while mine was laid up, and something went wrong with the steering-gear.

GILL. How did you make out about that traffic-cop?

AUBREY. Oh, I squared that up all right.

CLARA. Where do you live up here, Mr. a—

GILL. I live out Richmond way. I'd like to get a house over this way more, on account of bein' a little nearer my work, but I don't see much chance.

CLARA. No, I don't know of any vacant houses around here right now.

GILL. No, your brother-in-law was tellin' me about the time he had gettin' hold of *this* one. [AUBREY turns to the buffet-mirror again and smooths his toupé with considerable precision.] Well, I'll be gettin' along. [*He starts out into the hallway.*]

CLARA [*With a bitter look over her shoulder at AUBREY, and following GILL out into the hallway*]. Well, thanks, ever so much, Mr. a— [*She puts the watch back of the statuette on the little stand at the left of the mantelpiece.*]

GILL. Don't mention it.

CLARA. I'm sure Mother'll be glad to have this watch. [AUBREY turns and looks after them. Then, with a glance toward the kitchen-door, he moves carefully to the mantelpiece and tries to see what is going on at the front-door.]

GILL. Yes; she might as well have it as one of them hunkies down there.

CLARA. Can you open it?

GILL. Yes, I got it. Good-bye.

CLARA. Good-bye; and thank you.

GILL. You're welcome. [*The front-door closes; and AUBREY glides hastily for the parlor-doors, in an attempt to avoid CLARA;—but just as he reaches the parlor-doors, she appears in the hall-door, and, with a quick glance toward the kitchen-door, comes forward to the back of the Morris-chair.*]

CLARA. Come here, Aubrey, I want to talk to you. [*He turns towards her, with an attempt at nonchalance.*] What do you mean by telling people that this is your house?

AUBREY. I didn't tell anybody it was my house.

CLARA. You *must* have told this man, or he wouldn't have said so.

AUBREY. What do you think I am, a liar?

CLARA. Yes, I do; one of the best I know.

AUBREY. Well, ask Amy what I said to him, she was here when I was talking to him.

CLARA [*Before he has finished speaking*]. I don't have to ask anybody anything!—you were lying to him here to-day, right in front of me.

AUBREY [*With a shade of challenge in his manner*]. What'd I say?

CLARA. That you'd fixed the automobile thing up.

AUBREY. It's fixed up, isn't it?

CLARA. You didn't fix it up. [*There is a slight pause, during which AUBREY, his dignity considerably outraged, moves forward and crosses in front of her to the front of the center-table, where he stops. CLARA moves down at the right of the Morris-chair to a point near him.*] You'd have gone to jail for six months only for Frank Hyland. And telling this man that you tried to persuade Pop to stop working.

AUBREY [*Over his left shoulder*]. So I did.

CLARA. When?

AUBREY. I didn't say it to him. But I told Amy he ought to stop. And I think he'd be right here to-day if he'd taken my advice.

CLARA. He wouldn't be right here to-day if he'd stopped expecting *you* to keep him. [*He moves further over to the right; and she follows him.*] And now, listen to me, Aubrey; I want to talk seriously to you. You've made a lot of trouble for us since you've been in this family; and I want you to stop it. There's no reason my husband, because he happens to have a few dollars, should be going around paying *your* bills.

AUBREY [*Half-turning to her.*] What do you want me to do?

CLARA. I want you to stop telling *lies*; for that's about all everything you do amounts to. Trying to make people believe your something that you're not;—when if you'd just stop your talking and your showing-off, you *might* be the thing that you're trying to make them believe you are. [*She glances toward the kitchen-door, and then speaks to him again, in a slightly lower tone.*] Your wife's going to have a child one of these days, Aubrey, and you want to pull yourself together and try to be sensible, like the man of a family *should* be. You're smart enough;—there's no reason why a fellow like you should be living in two rooms over a barber shop. I should think you'd have more respect for your wife. [*She turns and moves a few steps up towards the kitchen-door.*]

AUBREY. A man doesn't stand much chance of getting ahead, Clara, when the boss has got a grudge against him.

CLARA [*Turning sharply to her right, and moving to the upper right-hand corner of the center-table*]. Well, stop your silly talk, and get rid of that carnation, and the boss might get rid of his grudge. [*She glances toward the kitchen-door again, leans across the table towards him, and lowers her voice.*] But, what I wanted to tell you was this, Aubrey,—I've asked Mom to let you and Amy come in here; and she sez she wouldn't mind it only

that she knows that the first thing she'd *hear* is that you'd told someone that you'd taken *her* in. And, you see, that's exactly what you've done already,—to this man that brought the watch. If I told Mom that there'd be war.

AUBREY. Are you going to tell her?

CLARA [*With authoritative levelness*]. I'm going to put that up to you. And the very first time I hear that you've told anybody that this is *your* house,—I'll see to it that you'll get a house that *will* be *your* own. [AUBREY *smiles, a bit smugly, and looks at her out of the sides of his eyes.*]

AUBREY. I guess your Mother'd have something to say about that, Clara.

CLARA [*With a measured evenness*]. Well, the only thing that needs to worry you, is what *I'll* have to say about it. [AUBREY'S *smugness begins to fade—into a questioning narrowness.*] This is my house—Pop left it to me; so that Mom'd always have a roof over her. For he knew how long she'd have it if Amy ever got round her. And if Amy ever got hold of it, he knew what she'd do if it ever came to a choice between you and Mom.

AUBREY. What are you doing, kidding me? [CLARA *holds his eyes steadily for a fraction of a second.*]

CLARA. I'm giving you a tip;—see that you keep it to yourself. [AUBREY *withdraws his eyes slowly and looks straight out, weighing this new bit of intelligence carefully in his mind.*] Be wise, now, Aubrey—you've got a chance to sit *in* here and live like a human being; and if you throw it way, you'll have nobody to blame but yourself. [There is a sound at the front-door of a newspaper being thrown into the vestibule, and a man's voice says, "Paper!" Then the front-door is heard to close.] Open that door there, Mom'll be wondering what it's doing shut. [She crosses up to the hall-door and goes out for the newspaper. AUBREY stands for a second thinking; and then AMY opens the kitchen-door and comes in. She glances about the room.]

AMY. Where's Clara, Aubrey?

AUBREY. I think she's out on the front porch. [AMY glances toward the hall-door, then turns to her husband.] How are you feeling?

AMY. All right, I just had some tea. Listen, Aubrey,—[She takes hold of the lapels of his coat.] Mom said we could come in here to live.

AUBREY. Yes, I got Clara to fix it up.

AMY. She said we could have *my* room.

AUBREY. Is it a front room?

AMY. No, it's that one at the head of the stairs.

AUBREY. Will we put that bureau of ours in there?

AMY. I think the one that's in there is better-looking. Let's go up and see. [She starts up towards the hall-door.]

AUBREY [Following her]. You look nice in black, Amy.

AMY [Glancing in the mantelpiece-mirror as she passes it]. This is the dress that Clara gave me. [CLARA appears in the hall-door with the evening paper in her hand.]

CLARA. It's in the paper here about that trial today. [AMY takes the paper.] Keep it out of sight and don't let Mom see it.

AMY [Going out the hall-door and to her left up the stairs]. I'll take it upstairs. [CLARA moves down towards the center-table, and AUBREY crosses above her towards the hall-door. As he passes her he excludes her with a look.]

AUBREY [Calling after AMY as he starts up the stairs]. Has it got my picture in it? [CLARA looks after him, rather hopelessly. MRS. FISHER comes in from the kitchen and moves down to the buffet at the right for her knitting-bag.]

MRS. FISHER. You goin' to stay here for supper to-night, Clara?

CLARA. Yes, I might as well, Mom; Frank won't be home. I think I'll run in next door and tell Bertha I won't be home. [She starts towards the kitchen-door.]

MRS. FISHER [*Crossing up to the mantelpiece for her spectacles*]. Yes, you'd better; she'll be expectin' you. Put somethin' around you.

CLARA [*Stopping at the hooks at the head of the cellar-stairs*]. Is there something here?

MRS. FISHER. Put that old raincoat of Joe's around you; it's good enough. [*She moves forward to the chair at the right of the center-table.*] And go to the side-door, Clara; and don't be bringin' Mrs. Harbison to the front. [*She sits down and puts on her spectacles; and CLARA shakes the old raincoat out and puts it around her shoulders.*] I told Amy she could have that side room upstairs.

CLARA. She might as well be using it, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. But I know I'm not goin' to hit it with *him*.

CLARA. Well, it's better to be fighting than lonesome, Mom. [*She goes out at the right, and MRS. FISHER takes a purple sweater that she's working on, out of the knitting-bag. A door out at the right closes after CLARA. MRS. FISHER commences to knit, when suddenly there is a shout of laughter from AUBREY upstairs. MRS. FISHER freezes instantly into a stoney stillness, and listens narrowly. There is another gale of laughter from AUBREY, and this decides MRS. FISHER. She puts her knitting back into the bag, very definitely, puts the bag on the table, gets up and marches resolutely across in front of the table and up to the hall-door. Just as she reaches the hall-door, with the ostensible purpose of reminding AUBREY that this is not his house, there is another roar from him. AMY can be heard laughing this time, also. MRS. FISHER subsides, and thinks. She appears to suddenly realize the futility of all remonstrances against the irresponsibility of AUBREY; and, after a thoughtful pause, to accept the situation. And as she moves back across the room, in front of the mantelpiece, to resume her chair at the right of the table, she seems a little older. Just as she reaches a point above*

the center-table, the front-door closes, with a bang. She starts nervously, and steps back to the mantelpiece to peer out into the hallway.]

MRS. FISHER. Is that you, Joe?

JOE [*From the hallway*]. Yes.

MRS. FISHER [*Continuing to her chair at the right of the table*]. It's a wonder you wouldn't take the door off the hinges, and be done with it. [JOE hurries in from the hallway.]

JOE. How did they make out down there to-day, Mom? [*He tosses the evening paper onto the center-table, and continues on over and up to the hooks at the head of the cellar-stairs, to hang up his hat and overcoat.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Sitting down*]. Who do you mean, Aubrey Piper?

JOE. Yes. Are they back yet?

MRS. FISHER. They're upstairs.

JOE. What'd they do to him?

MRS. FISHER. They fined him.

JOE. How much?

MRS. FISHER [*Taking her knitting out of the bag*]. I don't know; they wouldn't tell me. Frank paid it. But, I'll find out it'll very likely be in the evening paper. [JOE comes forward to the center-table.]

JOE [*Picking up the paper from the table*]. It isn't in this paper, I looked.

MRS. FISHER. I'll find out.

JOE. But, there's something else in to-night's paper, Mom.

MRS. FISHER [*Knitting*]. What?

JOE [*Indicating a certain point on the paper*]. Just cast your eyes on this, right here.

MRS. FISHER [*Looking casually*]. What is it?

JOE [*Reading*]. "Philadelphia Youth Makes Important Chemical Discovery. Mr. Joseph Fisher of North Philadelphia Per

fects Rust-Preventive Solution.” [He gives his Mother a squeeze and a kiss.]

MRS. FISHER [Startled, and giving him a little slap]. Stop it, Joe! [He laughs exultantly, strikes the palms of his hands together, and strides across above the table towards the left.] Did they buy the thing from you, Joe?

JOE [Turning to her, at the left of the center-table]. One hundred thousand dollars, Mother! They signed for it this afternoon in the lawyer’s office. [He becomes aware that the shoe-lace of his right shoe is untied, and puts his foot up on the chair to tie it.]

MRS. FISHER [Leaning towards him]. The Meyers and Stevens people?

JOE. Yeh. They sent for me to come over there this afternoon about two o’clock, so I knocked off and got hold of Farley right away, and we went over there. And they had the contracts all drawn up and everything.

MRS. FISHER. What did you say about a hundred thousand dollars, Joe?

JOE. That’s what they paid for it this afternoon, on account; —[He starts across above the center-table and up to the hooks again at the right, removing his coat.] then they’re to market it for me from their laboratories, and give me half the net.

MRS. FISHER [Talking over her right shoulder]. What’s the net?

JOE [Hanging his coat up]. Whatever’s left after all expenses are paid. [MRS. FISHER tries to encompass the situation.]

MRS. FISHER. I guess they’ll see that there ain’t much left, won’t they?

JOE [Coming forward again to the center-table]. Why, there’ll be a fortune out of this thing, Mom. Have you any idea what a rust-preventive means as an industrial chemical problem? Why, they’ll make a million dollars out of this, within the next five years. [He moves over to the left, removing his tie.]

MRS. FISHER. Well, how much of that are you goin' to get, Joe?

JOE. I'll get the same as they get, that's the contract.

MRS. FISHER. A million dollars?

JOE. Easy, I got a hundred thousand today. [MRS. FISHER shifts her eyes and tries to concentrate.]

MRS. FISHER. How many noughts is a hundred thousand?

JOE [*Coming back to her left, taking a pencil from his vest-pocket*]. It's a one, [*He leans over the table and writes it on the margin of the newspaper.*] and two noughts, and three more noughts. [MRS. FISHER looks at it closely. JOE replaces the pencil in his pocket and moves across again towards the left.] They paid that today on account. I knew it was coming, though; their head chemist out at Bristol told me six weeks ago it was all set. I've got to go over there to their offices right away; they made an appointment for the newspaper and magazine people over there at five o'clock. [*He starts for the hall-door.*] I've got to talk to them.

MRS. FISHER. Did they give you any of the money, Joe?

JOE [*Stopping at the hall-door*]. A hundred thousand dollars, sure.

MRS. FISHER. Not in money, though?

JOE [*Laughing, and coming back towards the center-table*]. Not in dollar bills, no; they gave me a check for it.

MRS. FISHER. Where is it?

JOE. Farley has it in his safe, down in the office.

MRS. FISHER. How much do you have to give *him*, half of it?

JOE. No, he's not a partner, he's just my lawyer. I give him five per cent of all monies received. [*He moves forward at the left of the center-table.*]

MRS. FISHER. How much will that be?

JOE. Well, that was five thousand dollars right off the bat, today. Pretty soft for that bird. When I first talked to him he

wanted to stick me for ten per cent; but I nailed that quick; I knew what this was goin' to be worth.

MRS. FISHER. What are you goin' to do now, Joe, stop workin'?

JOE. No, of course not, I'm not goin' to stop working; I've got that oil-paint thing on the carpet, now.

MRS. FISHER. Well, won't you have to go to Washington or someplace?

JOE [*Rolling his tie up on his finger, and stuffing it into his vest-pocket.*] No, that's all been attended to. But I'll tell you, Mom—I might go to Trenton.

MRS. FISHER. New Jersey?

JOE. Yes.

MRS. FISHER. Not to live, surely?

JOE. I might—till I put this oil-paint thing through.

MRS. FISHER. Well, I think you'd be very foolish, Joe, to go to Trenton at *your* age.

JOE [*Removing his cuff-links and dropping them into his vest-pocket.*] Well, the Meyers and Stevens people made me a proposition this afternoon that looks pretty good. They've got one of the most perfectly equipped experimenting laboratories in the world, just outside of Trenton; and it's open day and night; and that's what I want. I'd have had this rust-preventive through six months sooner, if I could have had the use of a laboratory somewhere at night. So they want me to go up there on a salary, with a first look at anything I strike; but I didn't want to say anything till I talked to *you*.

MRS. FISHER. What do you mean?

JOE. I mean, I wouldn't like the idea of goin' away, and leavin' you alone in the house.

MRS. FISHER [*Resuming her knitting.*] Oh, you go ahead, Joe,—if it's for your good. Never mind me,—I'll get along some way.

JOE. I don't like the idea of leavin' you here alone.

MRS. FISHER. Nearly every Mother is left alone, Joe, if she lives long enough. [JOE looks straight out and thinks.]

JOE. I was wonderin', Mom,—why Amy couldn't come in here: she seems to be havin' a pretty tough time of it. [There is a slight pause, during which MRS. FISHER knits.]

MRS. FISHER. She's *in* here already; and her man with her.

JOE. I mean, to stay.

MRS. FISHER. They're goin' to stay;—she can have that room at the head of the stairs. [She stops knitting and thinks, looking steadily at the floor in front of her.] They'll have to live somewhere; and I guess it'll have to be here. It's just as our Clara said here one night,—I remember it as if it was yesterday. She said, "Remember what I'm telling you, Mom,—it's *you* that'll have them on your hands if she takes him." And I suppose that's true. She made her bed,—and I guess it's me that'll have to lie in it.

JOE [Starting up and across towards the hooks at the head of the cellar-stairs, to get a paper out of his coat-pocket]. They want me to go to Trenton right away.

MRS. FISHER. What would you do, Joe, come home over Sundays?

JOE. Sure, it's only thirty-eight miles from here.

MRS. FISHER [Astonished.] Is that all the further Trenton is from Philadelphia?

JOE [Starting across towards the left to the hall-door, removing his vest]. That's all.

MRS. FISHER. It always seemed very far away to me. I guess it's the name.

JOE. I'm goin' up to get fixed up a bit before I go over to that office.

MRS. FISHER [Suddenly putting her knitting on the table, preparatory to getting up]. Well, listen, Joe!

JOE [*Stopping, with his foot on the first step of the stairs*].
What?

MRS. FISHER [*Getting up and moving across in front of the center-table*]. Come here. [JOE comes down to her left.] Don't say anything about this to him, Joe, or he'll be wantin' to go up and talk to the newspaper men, too. [JOE laughs faintly, then looks away off and thinks.]

JOE. You know, Mom,—I kinda feel that there's somethin' comin' to that nut out of this thing.

MRS. FISHER. How do you mean?

JOE. *He* gave me an idea here one night.

MRS. FISHER [*Seizing him suddenly by both arms*]. Well, for God's sake, don't tell *him* that, Joe!—or, as sure as you live, he'll be tellin' everybody that he done the whole thing.

JOE. You remember the night he was sayin' here about bein' at work on a solution for the prevention of rust in iron and steel?

MRS. FISHER. Yes.

JOE. Well, you know, I'd been tellin' him somethin' about it a week or so before—

MRS. FISHER. Yes, you told me.

JOE. While he was waitin' here for Amy one night.

MRS. FISHER. Yes.

JOE. Well, he forgot that night he was tellin' *me* about it that it was *me* that had been tellin' *him* about it; and he got it mixed.

MRS. FISHER. That's the way he does with everything.

JOE. And it was the way he got it mixed, Mom, that gave me the idea. *He* said,—that it was a combination of chemical elements to be added to the metal in it's *molten state*, instead of applied *externally*, as they *had* been doin'. And I *landed* on it—the way Howe did when he dreamed of puttin' the eye in the point of the needle instead of the other end. That was exactly what *I'd* been doin'—applying the solution *externally*—in a mix-

ture of paint. But the next day, I tried adding parts of it to the molten state of the metal, and it did the trick. Of course, he didn't know what he was sayin' when he said it—

MRS. FISHER. He never does.

JOE. And he didn't know anything about the solution-formula.—But it was the way he got what I'd been tellin' him *twisted*, Mom,—that put the thing over.

MRS. FISHER. Well, that's no credit to him, Joe.

JOE. I know.

MRS. FISHER. He was only blowin' when he said it.

JOE. Sure.

MRS. FISHER. He don't know what a formula means. And I'd have told him where he heard it, too, if I'd been you.

JOE [*Thoughtfully*]. I'd like to give him a little present of some kind. [*His Mother looks at him sharply.*]

MRS. FISHER. What would you give him a present for?

JOE [*Breaking into a little laugh*]. For makin' a mistake.

MRS. FISHER. That's all everybody's doin' around here,—givin' that fellow presents for makin' mistakes. That's what Frank Hyland said here to-day, when I ast him why he paid his fine. He said, "Oh, you've got to give a little present here and there once in a while." There's no use tryin' to be sensible anymore.

JOE. I'd like to give him *somehin'*. [*She looks at him again keenly, and thinks for a second.*]

MRS. FISHER. I'll tell you what you can do, Joe, if you're so anxious to *give* him *somehin'*.—Find out what fine Frank Hyland paid for him this afternoon, and tell him you're goin' to give him that. But don't tell him what you're givin' it to him *for*, Joe, or we won't be able to live in the house with him. And don't give him money, Joe; for he'd only be goin' from one room to another here in an automobile. And don't give it to her neither, Joe; for she'll only hand it right over to him.—Give it to me. [*JOE looks at her.*] And I'll give it to them when I

think they need it. [*A door closes out at the right; and JOE steps up towards the mantelpiece to look off.*] That's Clara; she's been next door telephoning'. [*She turns to her left and picks up her knitting from the table and sits down again. CLARA comes in, slipping off the raincoat.*]

JOE. Hello!

CLARA [*Hanging the raincoat up on the hook*]. How's it you're home so early, Joe? [*AUBREY enters from the hall-door, smoking a cigar.*]

JOE. The long threatening has come at last!

CLARA [*Coming forward, looking at him seriously*]. What?

JOE. The big news.

CLARA. The steel thing? [*JOE laughs.*] Did they buy it, Joe?

JOE. One hundred thousand dollars!—first payment—they gave me the check this afternoon.

CLARA. Joe, you're not telling me the truth!

AUBREY [*Coming forward*]. Something about the invention, Joe?

JOE. Hello, Aubrey!

CLARA [*Coming down to her Mother's right*]. Did they, Mom?

JOE and MRS. FISHER, *speaking together*.

MRS. FISHER. —So he sez.

JOE. —They bought it this afternoon.

CLARA. Isn't that wonderful!

AUBREY [*Extending his hand to JOE*]. Congratulations!

JOE [*Laughing*]. Thanks.

AUBREY. So we put it over! [*MRS. FISHER poisons him with a look.*]

JOE. To the tune of one hundred thousand clackers. [*He swings above AUBREY towards the hall-door.*]

AUBREY [*Turning and following him*]. No kidding?

JOE [*Running up the stairs*]. The check's in the safe, down in the lawyer's office.

AUBREY [*Calling up the stairs after him*]. Well, Kid, you know what I always told you!

JOE and CLARA, *speaking together*.

JOE. —Leave it to you to call the turn, Aubrey.

CLARA [*Running up to the hall-door*]. Joe! Come here and tell us something about it.

JOE [*Calling back*]. I've got to get dressed, Clara, I'll tell you about it later. [*AUBREY comes forward at the left, laughing; but suddenly he becomes conscious of Mrs. FISHER's left eye, and his laugh freezes into a detached gaze out the window at the left.*]

MRS. FISHER [*Speaking to CLARA*]. He's got to go down to see them people that bought the thing from him.

CLARA [*Coming forward to the center-table*]. Why, what will Joe *do* with all that money, Mom?

MRS. FISHER [*Knitting*]. Heaven knows, I don't.

CLARA. Have you any idea how much a hundred thousand dollars is?

MRS. FISHER. Joe sez it's a one and two noughts, and then three more noughts.

CLARA. Why, it's a fortune!

MRS. FISHER. Well, he brought it on himself; he'll have to tend to it; I'm sure I won't.

AUBREY [*Coming towards the center-table from the left*]. If he's a *wise bird*, he'll let *me* handle that money for him. [*Mrs. FISHER pins him with a look, and her knitting slides to her lap.*] I could give him a couple of very fly tips on that.

MRS. FISHER [*With dangerous steadiness*]. He don't want *your tips*; nor your *taps* neither. We know about one tip you gave a man, and his arm has been in a sling ever since. [*CLARA picks up the "Delineator" from the table and moves over to the right to the buffet, to look at the styles.*]

AUBREY. That's all right, Mrs. Fisher; but if he's a wise

Bimbo,—he'll take the drooping left, [*He lowers the lid of his left eye, very mysteriously.*] and I'll double that money for him, within the next two weeks; [MRS. FISHER resumes her knitting.] and give him an extra pair of trousers.

MRS. FISHER. I guess he'd need an extra pair of trousers, if he was sittin' around waitin' for *you* to double his money for him.

AUBREY. Well, I'm telling you, Mother,—he's an awful straw-ride if he doesn't get in on some of that copper-clipping that those people are writing me about. [*She looks at him, hard.*]

MRS. FISHER. What is it, a copper mine this time?

AUBREY. 'Tain't a mine at all,—it's a mint.

MRS. FISHER. What are they writin' to *you* about it for?

AUBREY. They're writing to everybody.

MRS. FISHER. They must be. [*She resumes her knitting.*]

AUBREY. Prospective Investors—They hear a man's got a few dollars laying around idle, and they get in touch with him.

MRS. FISHER. Well, nobody's heard that you have any dollars layin' around idle, have they?

AUBREY [*With a touch of consequence*]. Oh,—I don't know,—they may have. [MRS. FISHER stops knitting and leans towards him, stonily,—her left elbow resting on the table.]

MRS. FISHER. Listen, Boy,—if you've got any dollars layin' around idle, it'd be fitter for you to pay Frank Hyland the money he paid to keep you out of jail, than to be lookin' around for an investment for it—in some old copper mine, out in God-Knows-Where—that you don't know no more about than them that's writin' to you about it. [*She knits again, indignantly.*]

AUBREY. I know a whole lot about this proposition, Mrs. Fisher; and so do a lot of other people. Why,—they say they can see enough copper in those rocks, right now, to keep this thing going for the next ten years.

MRS. FISHER [*Almost violently*]. They shoot that in there.

AUBREY. Shoot copper into solid rocks, eh?

MRS. FISHER [*Putting her knitting down on the table and picking up the newspaper that JOE has left there*]. That's what I said. [AUBREY *turns away, with a gesture of helplessness, and moves across in front of the Morris-chair to the window at the left.*] I read all about just how they do it, in a magazine not two weeks ago. [*Looking at the paper.*] Then they shoot a lot of letters to the likes of you, and you *shoot off* about it.

AMY [*Entering hurriedly from the hall-door and coming forward to the center-table*]. Mom, is it true what Joe sez about the invention?

MRS. FISHER [*Looking sharply at something in the paper*]. Here it is in the paper. [AUBREY *moves across above the Morris-chair towards the center-table.*]

AMY. Isn't that wonderful, Aubrey? [AUBREY *nods and smiles.*]

MRS. FISHER [*To CLARA*]. I thought our Joe said it wasn't in here.

CLARA [*Moving a step or two from the buffet*]. What is it?

AMY [*Leaning over her Mother's left shoulder, looking at the paper*]. What does it say, Mom?

MRS. FISHER [*Reading*]. Mad Motorist Fined One Thousand Dollars for Reckless Driving. [AUBREY *glides forward and crosses in front of the Morris-chair to the window at the left again.* AMY *straightens up and gives a distressed look at CLARA, who suggests, with a nod, that she go into the kitchen.*] Mr. Aubrey Piper, of 903 Lehigh Avenue, was arranged today before Magistrate Lister of the 22nd and Huntington Park Avenue Police Station, to answer to the charge of having disregarded traffic-signals at Broad Street and Erie Avenue last Monday evening; resulting in rather serious injuries to Mr. Joseph Hart, a traffic-officer. The defendant was fined one thousand dollars for recklessness, disregard of traffic-signals, and operating an automobile without a license. [*She lowers the paper to her lap and looks at AUBREY.*]



Amy. "WHAT DOES IT SAY, MOM?" Page 122.

AUBREY [*Turning from the window, and with a magnificent gesture*]. That's the law for you. [*He folds his arms and leans on the back of the Morris-chair, looking straight out.*]

MRS. FISHER. What do you think of that, Clara?

CLARA [*Moving to the arm-chair below the buffet at the right*]. Well, it's all over now, Mom—Frank paid it.

MRS. FISHER. What did he pay it for?

CLARA [*Sitting down*]. Well, it was either that or go to jail, Mom; and you wouldn't want that, on account of Amy. [*She opens the "Delineator"*].

MRS. FISHER. Well, Frank Hyland didn't have to pay it— [*She sits looking straight out, fuming.*] Amy's got a Mother. [*Turning sharply to CLARA.*] And you take that thousand-dollar insurance check that I gave you and give it to him as soon as ever you see him. I don't want Frank Hyland goin' around payin' out thousand-dollar bills on account of this clown. [*She looks bitterly at AUBREY, who looks at her with an expression as though he were trying to come to some conclusion as to the most effectual means of putting her in her place.*] It's bad enough for me to have to do it.

CLARA [*Calling to AMY*]. Amy.

AMY [*From the kitchen*]. What?

CLARA. Come here a minute. [*MRS. FISHER puts the newspaper back onto the table and resumes her knitting. AUBREY strolls over and sits down at the left of the center-table, reaching for the newspaper which MRS. FISHER has just put down. AMY comes in from the kitchen.*]

AMY. What?

CLARA. Here's that skirt I was telling you about. [*AMY comes forward to CLARA'S left and they look at a certain skirt in the "Delineator."*] AUBREY deposits some ashes from his cigar on the little tray on the table, then sits back, takes a pair of tortoise-shell rimmed glasses, with a black-tape attachment for over the

ear, from his vest-pocket, and settles them on his nose. His Mother-in-law gives him a look.]

AUBREY. Was that Insurance man here to-day? [AMY opens the left-hand drawer of the buffet and takes out a package of Life-Savers. She takes one herself, then offers CLARA one; CLARA takes it; and the two continue their discussion of the styles in the "Delineator."]

MRS. FISHER. What do you want to know for?

AUBREY [*Glancing over the evening paper*]. Nothing,—I was just wondering if he got around this way to-day.—Did he leave a paper here for me?

MRS. FISHER [*Knitting*]. He *wanted* to; but I told him not to waste his time—[AUBREY looks at her narrowly.] talkin' to you about fifty-thousand-dollar policies.

AUBREY. Well, what about it?

MRS. FISHER [*Looking at him*]. Nothin' at *all* about it; oniy the man was laughin' up his sleeve at you.

AUBREY. Is that so?

MRS. FISHER. What else *could* he do? He knows you haven't the faintest idea of takin' out any such policy.

AUBREY. How do you know he does?

MRS. FISHER. Because he knows you're only a clerk; and that you don't get enough salary in *six months*—to pay one year's premium on a policy like that.

AUBREY. What were you doing, handing out a line of gab about my business?

MRS. FISHER [*Quietly knitting again*]. You haven't got any business for anybody to hand out a line of gab about—that I ever heard of. [AMY moves slowly across above the center-table towards the left, picking up a newspaper.]

AUBREY. Well, whether I have any line of business or not, it isn't necessary for you to be gabbing to perfect strangers about it.

MRS. FISHER [*Getting mad*]. Then, you stop gabbin' to people about fifty-thousand-dollar policies!—On your thirty-two dollars a week. [*Turning to him furiously.*] I told him *that*, too.

AMY [*Touching AUBREY on the left shoulder, as she passes back of him.*] Keep quiet, Aubrey.

MRS. FISHER. So he'd know how much attention to pay to you the *next* time you start. [*AMY moves forward to the Morris-chair at the left and sits down.*]

AUBREY. What else did you tell him?

MRS. FISHER. I told him the truth!—whatever I told him.—And I guess that's more than can be said for a whole lot *you* told him. [*She knits again.*]

AUBREY [*Resuming his paper*]. A man'ud certainly have a swell chance trying to make anything of himself around *this hut*. [*MRS. FISHER stops knitting, and leans her elbow on the table.*]

MRS. FISHER. Listen, Boy,—any time you don't like this *hut*, you go right straight back to Lehigh Avenue to your two rooms over the dago barber shop. And I'll be glad to see your heels.

CLARA. Stop talking, Mom.

MRS. FISHER. Nobody around here's tryin' to stop you from makin' somethin' of yourself.

AUBREY. No, and nobody's trying to help me any, either; only trying to make me look like a *pin-head*—every chance they get.

MRS. FISHER. Nobody'll have to try very hard to make *you* look like a *pin-head*; your own silly talk'll do that for you, any time at all.

AUBREY. I suppose it's silly talk to try to make a good impression.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to him and speaking definitely*]. Yes; it's silly to try to make an impression of any kind; for the only one that'll be made'll be the right one,—and that'll make itself.

AUBREY. Well, if you were out in the world as much as *I* am,

you'd very soon see how much easier it is for a fellow to get along—if people think he's got something.

MRS. FISHER. Well, anybody that'd listen to *you* very long 'ud know you *couldn't* have very much.

AUBREY. Is that so.

MRS. FISHER [*Tersely*]. You heard me. [CLARA rises and moves towards her Mother.]

AUBREY [*Reaching over to dispose of some more cigar-ashes*]. People that are smart enough to be able to make it easier for you—

CLARA. Aubrey,—that'll do. [*He is silenced; and resumes his paper. CLARA shows her Mother a particular pattern in the "Delineator."*] Mom, that'd look good for that new black crepe de chine of yours, No. 18, there in the middle.

MRS. FISHER. But, I wouldn't want that bunch of fullness like that right there, Clara. [JOE enters hurriedly from the hall-door, wearing a clean shirt and collar, and with his face washed and hair combed.]

CLARA. Well, you're always saying you look too thin; and I think—Joe, tell me something about the invention.

JOE [*Crossing quickly to the hooks at the right for his coat*]. They telephoned for me this afternoon about two o'clock, and I got hold of Farley and we went right over there. And they had the contracts all drawn up and everything.

CLARA [*Having moved up towards the hooks with him*]. Well, did they really give you a hundred thousand dollars for it? [AUBREY gets up and moves around and up to the upper-left hand corner of the table.]

JOE [*Coming forward, putting on his coat*]. Check's in the safe, down in Farley's office.

AUBREY [*Flicking some ashes from his cigar*]. Joe!—what do you think we ought to do with that money? [JOE tries to hide his laughter, and steps down to his Mother's right; and CLARA comes forward and leans on the buffet.]

JOE. You know, it was a funny thing, Mom,—when I first talked to the Meyers and Stevens people, I was only to get *fifty* thousand dollars advance; and when I went up there to-day they had the contracts all made out for a *hundred* thousand.

AUBREY. And they're getting away with murder at that.

MRS. FISHER [*Turning to him impatiently*]. Oh, keep still, you!—You don't know anything about this at all.

AUBREY. I made *them* think I knew something about it.

MRS. FISHER. You made *who* think?

AUBREY. The Meyers and Stevens people.

JOE. What are you talkin' about, Aubrey, do you know?

AUBREY. Certainly, I know what I'm talking about. *I* went to see those people, last Saturday afternoon, after you told me they'd talked to you.

JOE [*Crossing towards him, to a point above the center-table*]. And, what'd you do up there?

AUBREY. Why, I told them,—that they'd have to double the advance, if they wanted to do business with us.

MRS. FISHER. And, what business was it of yours?

AUBREY. Well,—I'm Joe's guardian, ain't I?

MRS. FISHER. Who told you you were?

AUBREY. Well,—he's got to have somebody tend to his business, doesn't he?—He's only a lad.

MRS. FISHER. Well, he doesn't need *you* to tend to his business for him—He tended to his business long before he ever saw *you*.

AUBREY. He never landed a hundred thousand dollars, though, till he saw me, did he?

JOE. Well, what did you say to them, Aubrey?

AUBREY. Why,—I simply told them that your Father was dead,—and that I was acting in the capacity of *business*-adviser to you: and that, if this discovery of yours was as important as you had led me to believe it was, they were simply taking

advantage of your youth by offering you fifty thousand dollars for it. And that I refused to allow you to negotiate further—unless they doubled the advance, market it at their expense, and one half the net—*sign on the dotted line. [He flicks more ashes from his cigar.]*

JOE. Well, did they know who you were?

AUBREY. I told them—that I was head of the house here; [*Mrs. Fisher grips the edge of the table, threateningly.*] and that I was also connected with the Pennsylvania Railroad.

MRS. FISHER. It's too bad they didn't know what you do down there; and call your bluff.

AUBREY. I beat them to it; I called theirs first. [*He strolls towards the left, with a bit of swagger.*]

JOE. Well, I certainly have to give you credit, Aubrey; that's the way the contract reads.

AUBREY [*Strolling back again*]. I told it to them; and I told it to your lawyer, too.

JOE. I'll have to give you a little present of some kind out of this, Aubrey.

AUBREY [*Dismissing the suggestion with a touch of ceremony*]. You'll not give me any present, Joe;—give it to your Mother. [*He strolls over to the left again*]. She'll need it more than I will. [*He comes forward at the left of the Morris-chair.*] Amy,—have you got the financial page there?

AMY [*Handing him the newspaper*]. Is this it, Aubrey?

AUBREY [*Taking it*]. Thank you. [*He crosses in front of her to the chair at the left of the center-table and sits down.*] AMY gets up, looking at him wonderingly.]

AMY. Aubrey, you're wonderful!

AUBREY [*Settling himself to look over the bond market*]. A little bit of bluff goes a long way sometimes, Amy.

AMY. Isn't he wonderful, Mom? [*Mrs. Fisher prepares to resume her knitting.*]

MRS. FISHER [*After a long sigh*]. God help me, from now on. [*The curtain descends slowly, with AMY standing lost in admiration of the wonder of AUBREY. When the curtain rises again AUBREY is reading, MRS. FISHER is knitting, CLARA is sitting reading the "Delineator," over on the arm of the arm-chair at the right, JOE is putting on his overcoat and hat at the mantel-piece-mirror, and AMY is sitting in the Morris-chair at the left, just looking at AUBREY.*]

THE END OF THE PLAY.

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